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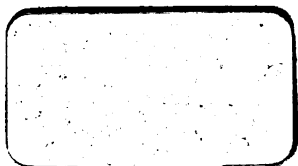
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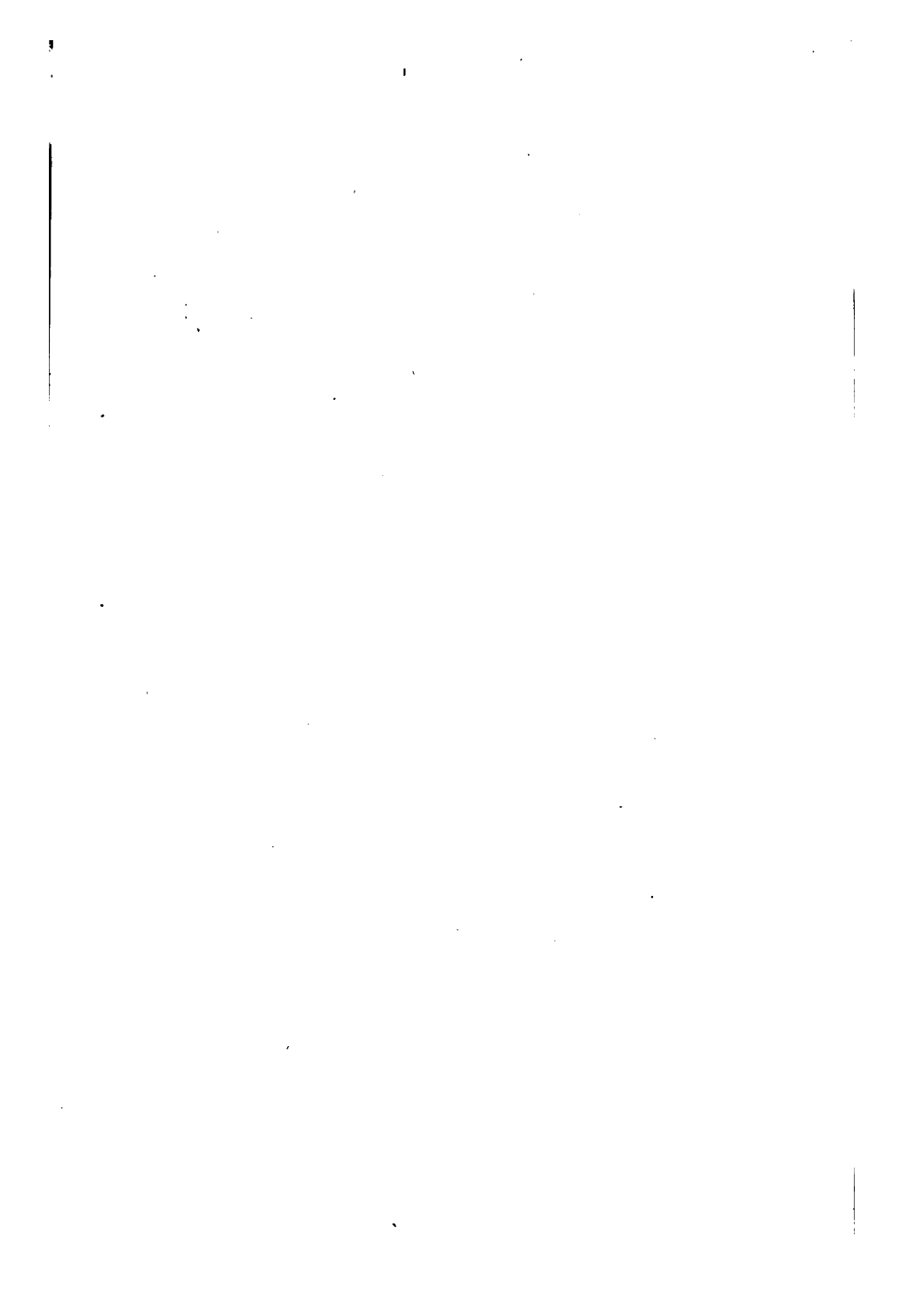
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**JOHN HOLDSWORTH: CHIEF MATE.**



# JOHN HOLDSWORTH: CHIEF MATE.

*A Story, in Three Vols.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JILTED."

"No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail: for being in a ship is being in a jail with the chance of being drowned."—*Dr. Johnson.*

VOL. II.

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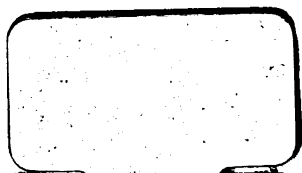
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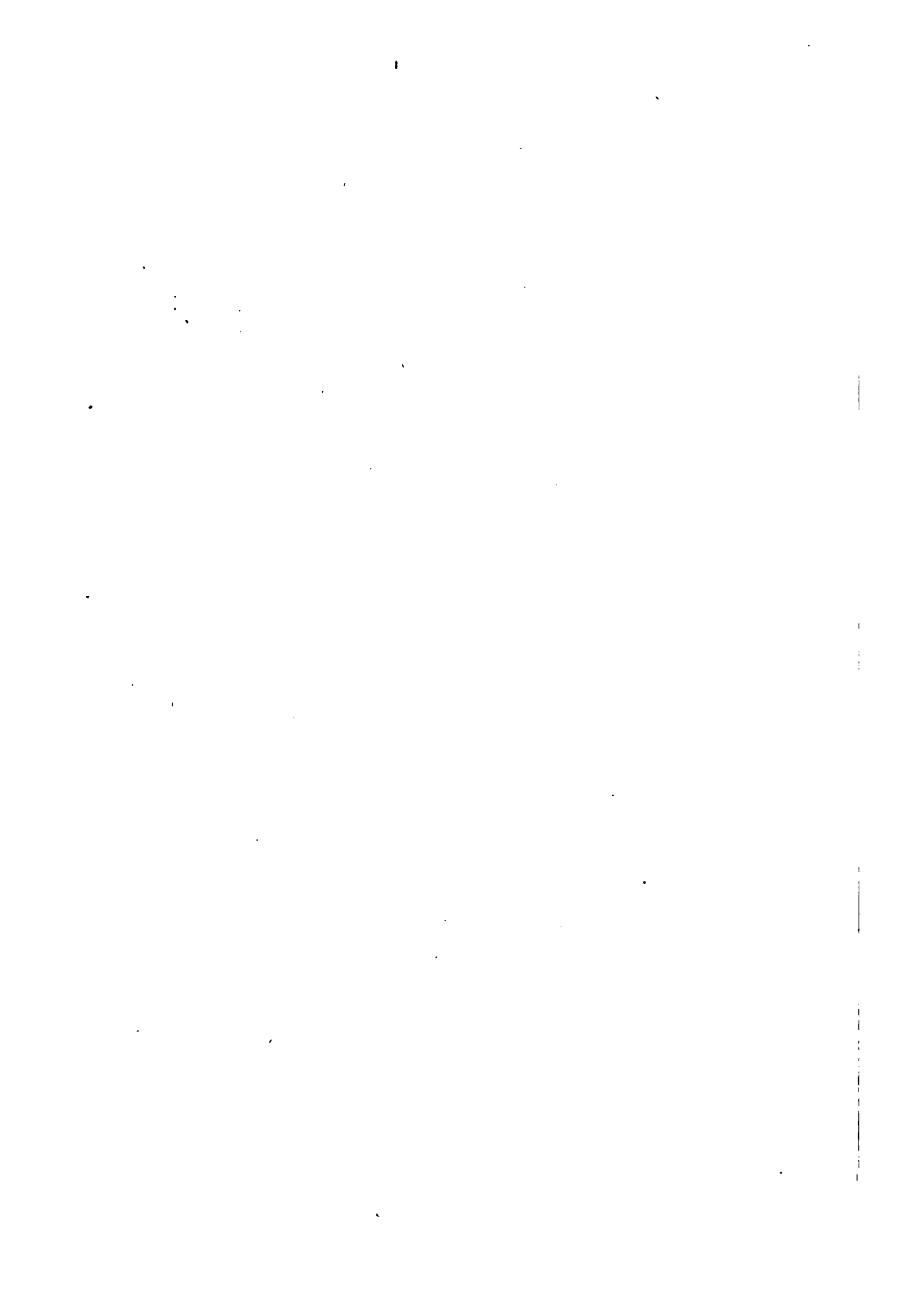
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**JOHN HOLDSWORTH: CHIEF MATE.**

sure, aggravate tenfold the craving for water. But suffering mastered him now. He seized the pannikin and pouring out some of the liquor, put it to the boy's dry lips. He drank greedily, but the ardent spirit checked his breath, and he struggled wildly, beating the air with his little hands.

But meanwhile Holdsworth had also drank, and handed the remainder of the draught to Johnson, his throat softened, and his tongue capable now of articulation. Johnson drew a deep breath, and exclaimed :

“Thank God for that, master. I should have taken it before had I thought it good for me.”

Holdsworth gave the boy a biscuit, which he grabbed at, and thrust large pieces into his mouth, as though seeking to



extinguish the fire that the rum had kindled.

When the pain of the burning spirit had passed, he said, "Give mamma some. When you were asleep, Mr. Holdsworth, I heard her calling for water."

Holdsworth, thinking that she slept, would not arouse her; but noticing that her arm hung awkwardly over the boat's side, and left the half-closed fingers trailing in the water, he raised it gently to place her hand on her lap. In doing this, he observed a lifelessness in her arm such as sleep could not induce. He peered into her face, and cried out quickly:

"Oh, my God!"

Then bade Johnson move, that he might get beside her, and reverently lifted her head.

There was no need to glance twice at her face to know what had happened, although

the heart-broken expression in it would almost suggest that she slept, and was dreaming a painful dream. Her eyes were half closed, her under-jaw had dropped, yet she looked even in her death a sweet, long-suffering woman.

"Give her something to drink," pleaded the little boy, passionately, imagining from her silence, and the expression on her face, that she was suffering as he had, and could not speak.

"She don't want it — she's dead!" answered Johnson.

Holdsworth half turned, but checked the exclamation that rose to his lips, feeling that the bitter truth must be made known to the child sooner or later.

The boy did not understand the answer; he crawled upon his mother's knee, with the pannikin in his hand, which he held

out whilst he said: "Wake up, mamma! Open your eyes! Mr. Holdsworth will give you something to drink."

Holdsworth removed the child, and seated him near the mast, and bade him stop there. He then returned, and lifting the poor woman from her seat, placed her gently in the bottom of the boat, throwing her dress over her face to hide the anguish in it, and blot out the mockery of the daylight.

The boy began to cry, and asked Mr. Holdsworth to wake his mamma up.

Neither of the men could answer him.

Shortly after this, the wind veered round to the north, and came on to blow in quick, fretful puffs. The sky grew cloudy, and indications were not wanting of the approach of a gale. Holdsworth took the helm, whilst Johnson lowered the sail and close-reefed it, and the quick jump of

the sea, coupled with the small space of sail shown, making it impossible for them to head for the east, without driving bodily to leeward, they slackened out the sheet and let the boat run, keeping the wind about two points on her port quarter.

A squall of rain came up and wetted them. They turned their mouths in the direction whence it came, and gaped to receive the delicious drops ; but it blew against their faces and slantwise along the sea, and was soon over. It left a little pool on one of the thwarts, and Holdsworth told the boy to put his lips to it. He did so, and lapped the moisture like a dog ; whilst Holdsworth and Johnson removed their cravats, which the rain had damped, and sucked them.

The wind increased, the sea became heavy, and the heavens overcast with a

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vast extent of lead-coloured cloud that stretched from horizon to horizon. At noon, when the boat was on the summit of a wave, Johnson caught sight of a vessel on their lee quarter. The boat plunged downwards, and the vessel was lost to view ; but, on mounting again, they beheld the vessel, under double-reefed top-sails, standing westwards right across their stern. She was not above a mile and a half away, but she might as well have been a thousand, for the boat could no more have made for her in that sea than she could have sailed in the wind's eye. There was a faint chance that the people on board of her might catch sight of the shawl that streamed like a black flag from the mast-head ; and, each time the boat sunk into a hollow, the poor men waited with wild and dreadful eagerness

for her to rise, that they might observe whether the vessel had seen and was following them. But she did not alter her course, and in ten minutes' time vanished in the haze.

Neither of the men spoke: Johnson, by the expression on his face, appeared to have resigned himself to despair, and all Holdsworth's thoughts were concentrated in keeping the boat clear of the seas which boiled around her. He was very weak; so much so that there were moments when, a sea catching the boat under the stern, he had scarcely the power to keep the yoke square and prevent the rudder from being jammed athwart-ships upon its pins by the pressure of the water; which, had it happened, would have swept the boat broadside on and filled her.

Added to this, the torment of thirst was

again upon him. He kept the end of his handkerchief in his mouth, literally chewing it to pulp, and constantly directing thirsty glances at the clouds, and praying for another shower of rain.

His own suffering made him perceive that the rum would be a curse to them whilst it lasted, inducing them to drink it, and presently maddening them with fresh accesses of thirst. The boy was suffering again, and was crawling upon his hands and knees over the thwarts in search of some rain moisture ; and presently Holdsworth saw him put his tongue against the mast and lick it. Johnson hung, with an air of despairful recklessness, over the boat's side, dashing the water in his face, and letting the foam fly up his arm and soak his breast.

The boat presently made a plunge down-

wards—a long, wild, sweeping fall ; the roaring of the waves sounded overhead ; the sail flapped, and there was a pause of breathless calm that lasted some moments.

Holdsworth looked behind him and shrieked out : “ Seize the boy, and throw yourself down ! ”

The man extended his hands, and, grappling the child, rolled backwards, under a thwart.

It came—a huge, green, unbroken sea, arching its emerald top on a level with the yard of the sail, and following the boat with a spring like a tiger's. Holdsworth stretched himself out, his feet hard against the aftermost thwart, his back squared, his elbows out, his hands grasping the yoke-lines with a death grip.

Up went the boat—stem up—yet up ! as though she must be flung clean over



on end ; then came the rush and roar of water—it fell with a weight of lead on Holdsworth's back, and beat, with a ponderous single blow, the breath out of him, but could not root him from his seat ; it broke into a vast surface of foam, divided, and swept forward, hissing, spluttering, bubbling, raging ; met at an angle at the boat's bows and half filled her ! Down she swooped into another hollow, and half the water ran out over her bows, the remainder, as she rose, came rushing aft and filled the stern-sheets ; and up and down, up and down it washed.

But the boat still lived, and Holdsworth was her master.

“ Bear a hand aft here and bale her out ! ” he shouted.

Johnson let go the half-drowned child, and struggled over the thwarts, blowing

and shaking his soaked hair like rope-yarns off his face, his clothes streaming with water ; flopped down, found the cocoa-nut shell, and baled with fury.

The child crouched in the bows, too terrified to cry.

The boat flashed along, skimming the frothing heads of the waves ; she had outlived an exceptionally heavy sea, and seemed to feel her triumph as she flew.

But, oh ! the ghastly burden that she bore ! the dead and dripping woman, off whose face the water had washed the covering, and left it naked to the daylight ; the gaunt bearded spectre baling out the boat on his knees, his wet clothes clinging to his frame like a skin of silk, and disclosing the piteous attenuation of the body ; the steersman, with wild and lustrous eyes sunk deep in livid sockets, the yoke-lines

writhed around his lean brown hands, his lips pale and cracked, and his long-neglected hair hanging like a wet mat over his forehead and down his back ; and the shivering little figure in the bows, his hands squeezed together in an attitude of prayer, and his small face glimmering with unearthly ghastliness upon the grey background of the boat's interior.

Some flying-fish leaped out of the sea close to the boat, and buried their silver arrow-like shapes in a wave some distance ahead. Then the sun broke through a rent in the broad sombre cloud, and made the pelting ocean joyous with a snatch of cheerful light. But the strong wind lasted all the afternoon, and when it lulled just before sunset, Holdsworth was so exhausted, that in rising to give his seat to Johnson, he reeled and sunk in a heap close beside

the corpse at the bottom of the boat, and lay motionless and insensible. Johnson made no effort to restore him. Indeed, he thought he was dead. His own brain whirled; his tongue seemed to fill his mouth; there crept over him such a stupor as had visited Holdsworth; he let the yoke-lines go, and fixing his eyes on the sea, prepared to meet the death which his sensations led him to believe was at hand.

The boat, tossed like a cork on the troubled water, broached to; but happily the wind was momentarily dying away; her head came round to the seas and she rode with as much safety as if Holdsworth were at the helm.

For a whole hour the interior of the boat presented the same scene; the men motionless as the dead body, the boy squatting in the bows with nothing seem-

ingly alive about him but his eyes, which winked as he rolled them seawards, where the sun shone on the water. Then Holdsworth began to groan and stir; whereupon Johnson fixed his dull eyes upon him, and watched him without any curiosity, without any sympathy, without any interest—indeed, scarcely, I might say, with human intelligence.

The boy, seeing Holdsworth move, came creeping aft and remained on his knees, first looking at the man awaking to consciousness, and then at his mother, whose motionlessness and drowned aspect, and face made unfamiliar to him by its total want of expression, terrified him.

Holdsworth raised his head and looked about him in bewilderment.

“Where have I been? What has happened?” he cried.

He fixed his eyes on the dead woman, his glance reverted to the boy, and then consciousness fully awoke. He rose wearily to his feet, and sank with a heavy sigh near Johnson, at whom he looked, scarcely knowing whether the man slept or was dead.

The boy begged for water.

"Water!" exclaimed Holdsworth in a choking voice, "there is none."

But there was biscuit, and he turned to the locker to give him one, thinking that the food might relieve the child's thirst. He stretched out his arm to lift the seat of the locker and found the locker filled with salt water. With a cry of despair he dragged out a bag streaming with wet, and thrusting his hand into it found its contents soaked into pulp. The other bag was in the same condition; and to make

matters worse, of the three bottles of rum that had been in the locker, one only was left; the other two were cracked and empty.

It was easy to understand how this had happened. A sea breaking over the boat's stern could not have filled the locker; the water which the boat had shipped over her bows had come rushing aft when the boat mounted the next wave, and filling the stern-sheets, raised the seat that formed the lid of the locker, and poured over the biscuit, at the same time forcing the bottles against each other and breaking them.

"Do you see what has happened!" exclaimed Holdsworth, grasping Johnson's arm. The man looked over his shoulder, shook his head, and muttered, "We're doomed to die. There's no hope, master."

What was to be done ? Holdsworth thought that if the biscuits could be dried in the sun they might be fit to eat, and endeavoured to spread some of them along the thwart ; but the stuff squeezed up in his hand like thick paste. He tasted a little and found it no better than salt, and he flung the bag down with a groan that seemed to express the extinction of his last faint hope.

But there was a bottle of rum left. He prised out the cork with the blade of his knife, and gave a spoonful to the boy diluted with two or three drops of sea water. He then set the pannikin to Johnson's lips, who sucked the hard metal rim as a baby might. Finally moistening his own throat with a small quantity of the liquor, he carefully corked the bottle and stowed it away.



No! To say that hope had entirely abandoned him would not be true. Whilst the heart continues to pulsate hope will still be found to live, however faintly, in its throbs, though each moment be heavy with pain, and nothing seem sure but anguish and death.

The wind had died away, but the boat rose and sunk to the long and heavy swell that billowed the gleaming surface of the sea to the horizon. Far away in the south was an expanse of gray cloud with slanting lines radiating to the sea from it, and a bright square of rainbow embedded in its shadow. It was travelling eastwards, and the rain would not touch the boat. Elsewhere the sky was a bright blue, with here and there clouds of glorious whiteness and majestic bulk — mountains with shining defiles and a splendour of

sunshine in their skirts — hanging their swelling forms over the sea. The sun was hot, but then, ever since they had been in the boat, they had been steering more or less south, and, taking the parallels in which the ship had foundered as a starting-point, every degree the boat made southwards would furnish an appreciable change of temperature.

The rum had worked beneficially in Johnson, who now began to stretch his body and look about him.

“Another calm, master,” he said, in a voice to which the dryness of his throat imparted a harsh unnatural tone. “I thought, I was dead and gone just now. God help us! I don’t think none of us three’ll live to talk of this here time!”

“We must put that poor body overboard,” said Holdsworth. “It isn’t fit that

her child should see her like that. Will you take him for'ard and stand between him and me, so that he can't see what I'm doing, and talk to him a bit ? I almost wish they had both died together. The sight of his sufferings makes mine more than I can bear."

He stifled a sob, and Johnson getting up languidly and holding on to the gunwale of the boat with one hand, took the boy by the arm and led him into the bows.

Holdsworth slackened off the halliards to lower the sail and screen the after part of the boat from the boy's sight. He then, with what strength he had, and as quickly as he could, raised the dead body and let it slip over the stern, muttering a simple prayer as he did so, that God would let her meet her child in heaven,

where they would never more be parted ; and then turned his back upon the water and hid his face in his hands.

At the end of five minutes he stole a glance astern—the body had disappeared.

“Four,” he muttered, “and three more to go ! O God, what work—what work this has been !”

His thoughts went to Dolly. If he died, what would become of her ? Not for many days yet, even supposing the other boats should make their way to land or be rescued by a passing ship, would the news of the “Meteor’s” loss reach her ; and he thought of her praying night and morning for him, straining her fond eyes into the dim future, where the coming summer was, with all its flowers and its sunshine ; where the happy day was that should bring

him to her. If the news of the shipwreck ever reached her, how would her gentle spirit support the blow ! But worse would it be if she remained ignorant of her loss ; because in that case she would live on in hope for months and months, wakening every morning with the idea that—To-day he may come ! to-day he may come ! until hope sickened and despair should bring cruel assurance of eternal separation—the more unendurable because she should not know *why* he did not come—whether he were living or dead—whether he were true or false to her !

Oh for the power of giving peace to that manly unoffending heart !

We shed tears, and well we may, God knows, over the privations of shipwrecked men, over the hunger and thirst and the mortal bodily agonies of poor souls doomed

to die a lingering and shocking death in open boats, storm-tossed, or baking in breathless calms under the burning eye of the sun; but do we think of that deeper misery of theirs—that poignant mental torture compared to which the sufferings of the flesh are as naught—the thoughts of those they shall see no more—of wives, and sisters, and mothers, and little children, many of whom may perchance never hear the story of their fate, and can have no tear for the famine and the thirst that wasted the flesh off their skins and submitted them to greater torture than the heart can bear to think of?

Holdsworth had believed that the sufferings of the boy would engross all his thoughts in himself, and that though he might miss he would not cry for his

mother. But he was deceived ; for, no sooner had the little fellow discovered that she was gone from her place in the bottom of the boat, than he uttered a sharp cry, and asked Holdsworth where his mamma was.

Holdsworth took him upon his knee, but could not answer. The child persisted in his inquiries, looking the while suspiciously and eagerly about him, particularly over the stern, where he had remembered seeing the actor disappear.

“She is gone to God,” Holdsworth said at last. “My little man, you will meet her again.”

“To God !” cried the child. “That’s where papa is !”

He looked up with startled eyes at the sky, and then sobbed passionately, “Has she left me alone ? has she left me alone ?”

“No, she has left you to me. Be a good boy now, and don’t cry, and I will take care of you, and love you dearly.”

His words smote him as the idlest mockery ; but apart from his mental sufferings, the mere effort of raising his voice pained him intensely. He put the child down, forcing a smile which seemed no better than a grin of pain upon his emaciated face, and then stood up to sweep the horizon, but soon sank down again with a sound as of a clanging of bells in his ears, and his throat constricted and burning with a dry, feverish heat, the pain of which was exquisite.

He was now sensible that his memory was going, for in trying to think of the child’s name, he found that he could not recall it. But this, somehow, gave him no concern, for his whole physical being



was in perfect accord with such lapses of the intellectual faculties, and the discovery bred not the lightest movement of surprise or apprehension in his mind.

At noon, Johnson asked for more rum, and Holdsworth measured out a small quantity for the three of them, diluting the draught as he had before done with a few drops of salt water.

The boy never moved from the seat where he had been placed by Holdsworth; he knew not, in reality, where his mother had gone, but there was plainly a suspicion in him that she was in the sea, and he kept his eyes fixed on the water, as though in expectation of her rising at the side of the boat. He shed no more tears; indeed, physical weakness had so far conquered him, that it had rendered him incapable of tears. The sight of his white,

young, piteous face, his head moving on his shoulders in convulsive jerks, and his helpless down-hanging arms, was enough to make one pray to God that death might remove him speedily, if the term of horrible misery were not to be ended at once.

The afternoon passed, and the sun went down behind a calm sea. While the crimson flush still lived in the sky, a flock of sea birds came from the south, and hovered awhile over the boat, as though irresolute to quit it for their further destination. They were at too great an elevation to enable the men to judge what birds they were; but they emitted harsh sounds, resembling in some measure the cry of gulls, mixed with the rough intonation of rooks. After this pause, they pursued their flight, and soon winged themselves out of view, but not without leaving behind them a

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species of desolate hope, such as would be excited in the minds of men who had been long banished from the sight of living things, and by whom the most trivial incident would be interpreted as an auspicious omen.

Holdsworth and Johnson drew together and spoke of what these birds portended. The wildest phantasies were begotten, and they sought to encourage themselves with dreams which a listener would have shuddered over as the babbling of delirium. Their thoughts being loosened, they presently began to complain of hunger; and Johnson took up a piece of the pulpy biscuit which lay on a thwart and which the sun had hardened, and bit it, but instantly ejected it, saying that it was bitterer than gall. Indeed, had there been more light they would have seen the frost-

like crystals of salt which had been dried into the biscuit by the sun's action. However, their hunger was not so fierce but that they could endure it yet awhile.

The night came down, quite radiant with stars, with not a cloud in all the great dome of glittering sky. The two men were now so regardless of their fate that they entered into no arrangement as to keeping watch, but folded their arms upon their breasts and slept or fell into a semi-unconscious state—lethargies so sinister that it was hard to tell whether they were not the sloping ways to death. Fitful cries sometimes broke from them, resembling the echoes which are awakened in the caverns of a bird-frequented cliff; but with notes of human anguish in them that made the glory of the stars a hellish mockery.

The boy slipped from his seat and lay prone at the bottom of the boat, unheeded by either Holdsworth or Johnson.

So passed the night.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH DAYS.

THE dawn awoke Johnson, who remained seated for some time motionless, with his open eyes fixed upon the sea half-way to the horizon. As he continued gazing, a wild smile of joy kindled up his face and parted his cracked lips into a grin so extravagant, so indescribable, that it converted his face into a likeness of humanity as repulsive and unreal as an ugly paper mask.

He thrust his bony fingers into Holdsworth's collar and shook him violently,

whilst he pointed to the sea with his right hand.

"Look! look!" he cried. "Wake up! wake up! there is the land! See the houses, master! and the trees! . . . O Jesus! how green they are! Wake up, I say!"

Holdsworth started up violently and shook himself, with a mighty effort, clear of the benumbing torpor that had weighed him down throughout the night. He stared in the direction indicated by Johnson, then rubbed his eyes furiously with his knuckles, and stared again, but could see nothing but the ocean growing blue under the gathering light in the east, and stretching its illimitable surface to the horizon.

"Come, master, let's get the oars out. Why, where have we drifted? O Lord, see the trees! how green and beautiful! I reckon there's water there—and I'll strip

and souse in it ! Will they see us ? Wave your hat !”

He took off his own and brandished it furiously. But all on a sudden he let fall his arm—he stretched his head forward, and his glassy eyes seemed to protrude from their sockets ; his breath went and came shrilly through his open mouth ; and then, giving a scream, he shrieked, “ It’s gone ! it’s gone !” and as if the disappointment were a blow dealt him by some heavy instrument, he gave a great gasp, collapsed, and fell like a bundle of rags from his seat.

The fit of convulsive trembling that had seized Holdsworth passed ; he caught sight of the boy lying on his side, with his eyes, wide open, fixed upon his face. The child was pointing to his throat. Holdsworth raised him and laid him along the seat, not conceiving that the little



creature had fallen from his resting-place during the night, but that he had placed himself in that position the better to rest his limbs.

He moistened his lips with rum, but on looking attentively at his face, perceived indications denoting approaching death as clearly as though the piteous message was written upon his brow. This perception gave him exquisite misery. The bright eyes of the child, suggesting sweet memories of the little wife he had left at Southbourne, had endeared the boy to him; he had been his playmate and companion on the "Meteor;" he had watched the deep and beautiful love of the mother; and her death, recent as it was, had imparted the deepest pathos to the little orphan, and made his claims upon Holdsworth's protection and love infinitely eloquent and

appealing. That he should be dying now—now that the bright sun was climbing the brilliant morning sky—dying for want of a cup of water, a morsel of bread—dying without a mother's love to enfold him in his last struggle and waft his young and innocent soul to God on the wings of a prayer, such as *her* agony, *her* devotion only could dictate—oh, it was too pitiful!

“My little boy—look up!—tell me—do you suffer? Where is the pain? Is it in your throat? Oh my poor innocent!”

His tears blinded him. He took his handkerchief and dipped it into the sea and laid it upon the child's throat.

The little creature seemed to feel his love, for he made a movement as if he would nestle against him, and smiled wanly, but could not speak. His young dying face was an unbearable sight, and Holds-

worth, groaning, gazed wildly around the horizon as if there—or there—or there—must be the ship sent by God to save the boy's life!

A long hour passed; the child still lived, and Holdsworth hung over him, heedless of the other poor creature who had awakened to consciousness, but yet lay in a heap, supporting his head against the stanchion of a thwart, and watching his companions with glazed eyes. Then a craving for food mastered Holdsworth, and he looked at the biscuit, but had yet sufficient control over himself not to touch it, knowing the penalty of increased thirst that must follow the absorption of the brine into his stomach. He went to the locker and plunged his arm into the water that half filled it, and groped about in search of he knew not what; something

to appease his craving might be there ; but he found nothing but slimy pieces of biscuit and the broken bottles.

In a sudden fury of hunger he tore off his boot and cut a piece of the leather from the top of it, and began to chew it.

The mere act of mastication somewhat diminished his suffering, and he returned to the boy. No marked change had occurred within the hour, but imperceptible as the departure might be, it was only too evident that the child was dying. Thirst, exposure, and grief—for there had been something so akin to a heart-broken expression in the little fellow's eyes when he stared at the sea, expecting his mother to rise from it, that it would be impossible to doubt the keenness of his sorrow—these things had done their work.

Holdsworth bathed his face and throat with salt water, and again offered to moisten his lips with rum; but the boy made a gesture of dissent. Indeed the rum served no other end than to irritate his lips and his tongue, which was swollen and discoloured.

As the day wore on, the torment of thirst abated in Holdsworth, and Johnson also seemed to suffer less. The first agony which thirst brings with it, and which endures for two or three days, was passing; the next stage would be a kind of insensibility to the craving for water; but this would presently be followed by a renewal of the suffering in its sharpest form, which would continue until death ended it.

Throughout the afternoon, Holdsworth remained at the side of the boy, who lay with half-closed eyes and no movement

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of the body, save the faint rise and fall of his chest as he breathed. They were neither of them much more than skeletons, and so ashen was the complexion of Holdsworth, so lustreless his eyes, so wild and gaunt and ragged his whole face with the grisly beard, the white lips, the livid hollows beneath the eyes, and the twisted, knotted hair upon his forehead and down his back, that he seemed much nearer to death than the child, whose infancy saved his face from being made actually repulsive by suffering.

Before sunset the boy became delirious, and mouthed shocking gibberish, being unable to articulate. For a whole half hour this babbling lasted, and then died out, and the boy grew conscious. Holdsworth supported his head on his knee, but he slightly twisted it round to look at the

sun, which was just then resting, a great orb of burning gold, upon the line of the horizon. He watched the sun intently, undazzled by the splendour, until it vanished, when he uttered a low wailing cry and stretched his arms out to it. Holdsworth felt his little body trembling, and some convulsive movements passed through him. Holdsworth kissed his forehead, and the boy smiled, and with that smile his spirit passed away.

When he could not doubt that he was dead, Holdsworth removed the little jacket from the child's back, covered his face with it, and laid him in the bottom of the boat.

The mere exertion of doing this made him fall half-swooning upon a seat, on which Johnson came staggering over the thwarts and gave him some rum. There was now

no more than a quarter of a pint left in the bottle.

"Master," said the man, bringing his lips close to Holdsworth's ear, "if I die first, please throw my body overboard. I don't like the notion of drifting about in this boat maybe for weeks, and becoming a sight not fit to be looked at, if e'er a ship should come by."

"I shan't live to do you that service," muttered Holdsworth. "I don't feel as if I could last out much longer."

"The curse of God is on us!" said Johnson. "There's nothing but calms, and to think of two being left out o' seven!"

The night fell quickly. At about ten o'clock a breeze came up from the north, and blew coolly and gratefully over the burning heads of the two men. It took



the boat aback, and Holdsworth acting from sheer instinct, put her before it, and hauling the sheet aft, steered east. No clouds came up with the wind ; it was a summer breeze which might lull at any moment, or veer round, perhaps, to the south - west, and bring up a change of weather.

Lying pretty close to the wind the boat required no steering, which was fortunate, for the yoke-lines soon slipped out of Holdsworth's hands, and a torpor stole over him, which, without actually suspending his consciousness, rendered his perceptions dreamy and useless. He rested with his back against the side of the boat, his head upon his breast, and his eyes half closed. Johnson crouched near the mast.

The breeze proved steady during the

night, but died away towards the small hours; then, at daybreak, sprang up afresh from the west. The heeling over of the boat aroused the two men, who languidly, and with gestures terribly significant of their growing indifference to their fate, dipped the sail, and again let the boat lie close to save the trouble of steering her.

When the morning was a little advanced, Johnson crept to the side of the dead boy and groped about him.

"What are you doing?" cried Holdsworth fiercely.

"Feeling if there isn't a piece of ship's bread in his pockets," answered the man doggedly, and looking up with a wolfish light in his sunken eyes.

"Let him alone!" said Holdsworth.

The man dragged himself away reluctantly, grumbling to himself, and resumed his place near the mast, keeping his eyes steadfastly fixed on the dead body.

A sick shudder passed through Holdsworth as he observed the man's peculiar stare, and, sinking on his knees, he uncovered the child's face and inspected it attentively, to satisfy himself that he was actually dead. He then raised him in his arms with the intention of casting him overboard. But Johnson came scrambling over to him and gripped him by the wrist.

The expression of his face, made devilish by suffering, was heightened to the horribly grotesque by the action of his mouth, which gaped and contorted ere he could articulate.

“What are you going to do? Keep him!” he exclaimed.

“Why?” answered Holdsworth, looking him full in the face.

But the man could not deliver the idea that was in his mind; he could only *look* it.

Holdsworth turned his back upon him and raised his burden on a level with the boat's gunwale, but Johnson grasped the body with both hands.

“Let go!” said Holdsworth.

The man with an oath retained his hold. Weak as Holdsworth was, the passion that boiled in him at the desecration the half-maddened wretch was doing his poor little favourite, gave him temporarily back his old strength. He raised his foot, and, planting it in Johnson's chest, hurled him

back ; the man fell with a crash over the thwart, and lay stunned.

Holdsworth leaned over the boat's side and let the body gently sink in the water ; which done, he felt that his own turn was come, and dropped in the stern-sheets groaning, with drops in his eyes that scalded them.

But he still lived, and whilst his heart beat nature would assert herself. Towards the afternoon a torturing craving for food beset him, started him into life, and made him sit upright. He wiped the foam from his lips and beheld it discoloured with blood. He looked savagely around him like a wild beast, and, beholding nothing but the dry, bare seats, the boat's hot interior with the gratings whitened by the heat of the sun, and

underneath them the glistening water that bubbled coolly and with a maddening suggestion of sparkling, refreshing springs, he dragged his knife from his pocket, pierced his arm, and put his lips to the wound.

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE TENTH DAY.

It was morning on the tenth day, dating from the foundering of the "Meteor."

A barque of about six hundred tons, named the "Jessie Maxwell," three weeks out from the port of Glasgow, having been becalmed all night, was standing south, with all sail set and a gentle breeze on the beam.

It was the second officer's watch on deck; he was sitting trimming his nails on the grating abaft the wheel, when the man who was steering, pointing to

the horizon a few points before the port beam, asked him if he could see anything black there. The second officer not having very good sight, stared awhile and declared that he saw nothing ; then, going forward, called to a hand in the main-top to tell him if there was anything to be seen on the port beam. The hand, shading his eyes, sang out that he could see a black object, but whether it was a boat or a piece of wreck he couldn't say. Whereupon Mr. Anderson stepped to the companion-hatchway, took down the glass, and, having adjusted it to his sight, levelled it.

“By thunder!” he cried, keeping the glass to his eye, “it’s a boat—and there’s a mast, and a lug-sail—and something black at the mast-head. But the de’il a soul can I make out aboard of her.”



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He had another good look, and then tucking the glass under his arm, went below.

In about three minutes' time he returned, followed by a small stout man with a good-humoured face, and a grave, middle-aged gentleman with a long black beard.

"There, sir; there she is yonder!" said Mr. Anderson, incapable of seeing her with his naked eye, but concluding that she must still be where he had at first sighted her, and willing to obtain the credit of a good sight by a simple device.

"I see something black," said the grave gentleman.

"Give us the glass!" exclaimed the short man, who was the skipper, and applied the telescope to his eye. "It is certainly a boat," he observed, after a bit; "but I don't see anybody moving in her."

What's that black thing at the mast-head ?  
Is it a signal ?

He turned to the man at the wheel :  
"Starboard your helm. Mr. Anderson, trim  
the yards. Yonder may be some perishing  
human beings."

The whisper soon went through the vessel  
that there was a boat in sight ; the watch  
below turned out of their hammocks and  
came on deck ; and soon the forecastle was  
lively with a crowd of hands gazing  
earnestly at the boat, which the alteration  
in the barque's course now made distinguish-  
able, and speculating as to the people who  
were on board of her.

"She looks to me like a ship's quarter-  
boat," said the skipper, with his eye to the  
glass. "The sheet of the sail is to wind-  
ward, and she's driving bodily to leeward.  
What in the name of conscience is the

meaning of that black flag at the mast-head?"

They neared her rapidly, but were puzzled to discover no living thing stirring in her, for though it was perfectly true that the sail had not been dipped, she had all the appearance of being manned. The water was so calm that the barque was able to run almost alongside the boat. There was a rush to the vessel's side, and then, as the boat was passed at a distance of forty or fifty feet, cries rose from the forecastle: "There's a man in the stern-sheets!"

"Do you see him, sir, lying with his head under the aftermost thwart?"

"There's two of them! See there—hard agin' the mast!"

The boat dropped astern and revealed her interior to the people aft.

“My God! Two corpses in her!” cried the second mate.

“Man the starboard fore braces!” shouted the skipper. “Starboard your helm!”

The wheel flew round; the port fore-braces were let go, and the mainyards backed. The vessel’s way was stopped and a dozen hands came aft to lower away the port quarter-boat. In jumped four men, the second mate at the tiller. “Lower away!” Down sank the boat, soused upon the water, the blocks were unhooked, out flew the oars.

In a few minutes the boat was alongside the coffin with the black flag at her mast-head. The men grabbed her gunwale, and stood up to look in.

God in heaven! what a scene!

Holdsworth lay on his back, his legs bent double under him, his arms stretched

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out, and his ghastly face upturned directly under a thwart. Johnson lay in a heap near the mast, and they thought him at first a bundle of clothes, until they caught sight of his hair and the fingers of one hand. *His* face was hidden; but Holdsworth looked a gray and famished skeleton, with God's signal of humanity eaten by suffering out of his face; his wrists like white sticks, covered with sores, one foot naked, and the skin of that and of his face of the complexion and aspect of old parchment.

Crumbling fragments of salted biscuit were scattered on one of the seats. Aft was the open locker half-filled with water, coloured like pea-soup by the ship's bread that was soaked and partially dissolved in it. In the bows were the empty kegs with the bungs out, and as the boat

swayed to and fro to the movements of the small waves with which the wind had crisped the sea, these kegs rolled against each other with hollow sounds.

The dry, baked appearance of the boat, the fragments of biscuit, the empty kegs, and the skeleton men, formed a spectacle of horror and extreme misery, such as the wildest imagination could not realise without memory and experience to help it. Nor in this picture of pure ghastliness was the least ghastly item the black shawl, which fluttered its sable folds at the mast-head, and, to the sailors, typified, as no other image could, the character and quality of the horror they contemplated.

"Can they be dead?" gasped one of the sailors, whose white face showed him almost overcome.

"Mr. Anderson!" came a voice from

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the barque's quarter-deck, "take the boat in tow and bring her alongside."

They made the painter fast to their stern, lowered her sail, and started with their grim burden gliding after them. The voices of the men overhanging the vessel's bulwarks rose in a low, deep hum, when the boat was near enough to enable them to see its contents again. The port gangway was unshipped, and some hands stood by with lines to hoist the bodies in board.

"Do they live?" called out the skipper.

"They both seem dead, sir," answered Anderson.

The boat was now brought right under the gangway, and the top of her mast being level with the bulwarks, submitted the shawl to the close scrutiny of the

sailors. They examined it with awe and curiosity.

"It isn't bunting," said one.

"It looks like bunting too!" exclaimed another.

"See how it's rigged up!" observed a third; "hitched on anyways."

"If it ain't a woman's dress tore in two, I give it up," said a fourth, "though there ain't no woman in the boat as I can make out."

By this time they were slinging Johnson under the arms and around the middle, ready to be hoisted over the gangway. Now that he was exposed, he made a more gaunt and sickening object than Holdsworth. He was an image of famine—of manhood killed by suffering—a picture such as the memory would retain when years had impaired its powers, and driven

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all other vivid impressions from it. The men fell back as the piteous object was reverently raised over the vessel's side, and placed upon a sail near the main-hatchway. Then followed the form of Holdsworth.

The captain and the gentleman with the long beard approached the two bodies.

"Can you tell me if there's any life in them, Mr. Sherman?" said the captain.

Mr. Sherman knelt and examined the two faces. The seamen pressed eagerly around to listen. The elements of the picturesque and the tragical entered so deeply into the scene as to make it extraordinarily impressive—the brown and rugged features of the sailors; the grave figure kneeling; the two bodies on their backs resembling skeletons poorly disguised by a rude imitation of human

skin; the black shawl streaming alongside, symbolising a story of cruel, lingering, horrible death; above, the white sails of the vessel, and over all a beaming sky and a joyous sun! And add the mysteriousness of these famished and motionless visitants—their name, their country, their story unknown—their white lips sealed!

“What do you think?” asked the captain.

“This man,” answered Mr. Sherman, indicating Johnson, “is certainly dead; and in my opinion——”

But at that moment the feeblest of feeble tremors passed through Holdsworth.

“Quick!” cried Mr. Sherman, springing to his feet. “This man lives; they may both be alive! Have them taken

below, Captain Duff! Quick, sir! every moment is precious!"

His excitement was contagious. The captain bellowed for the steward. Others seized upon the bodies and hurried aft with them. The murmur of many voices rose and swelled into a hubbub.

"Aft here to the davits, and hoist the boat up!" sang out the second mate; who, while this was doing, went below to take instructions as to the other boat, and returned with orders to get it in board.

The curiosity of the men to handle and examine this boat was so great, that when the order was given for some hands to get into her, the whole ship's company made a rush to the gangway. But this tumult was soon quelled by the help of a few Scotch curses. The boat was

hauled round to the starboard side, and tackles rigged on to the fore and main yard-arms. Up came the boat cheerily, with her mast unshipped, and was lashed athwart-ships just before the main-hatch-way. The vessel's yards were then trimmed, and away she slipped through the water.

The hands could not be got away from the boat. Had she been the fossilised remnant of some antediluvian Armada, she could not have been examined by the men with more intense and breathless curiosity. There was no name on her, no clue of any kind to tell the ship she had belonged to, where she was built, what port she hailed from. There was, indeed, the word "London," together with some figures branded upon the kegs; but this indicated nothing. They dragged the soaking bags

of biscuit out of the locker, where they also found the fragments of the rum-bottles; and deep and numerous were the ejaculations these simple things called forth from the sailors, who gathered a story from them of which my hand is powerless to impart the thrilling pathos to my unvarnished version.

"See here!" said a man, shaking the kegs; "not a drain of water in them!"

"Here's a boot with a piece cut clean out from the top of it," said another.

"Some one has tried to make food out o' that!" said an old salt, shaking a quantity of ringlets. "I've heerd tell of worse stuff nor boots being eat by castaway men!"

The fragments of dried biscuit were passed around and examined with wondering attention. The sail, the oars, the gratings—all came in for their share of closest and

absorbed scrutiny. But the object that most excited speculation was the poor widow's shawl, which, having been drenched and dried, and drenched and dried again, had become rotten, was full of holes, and as much resembled a shawl as a waistcoat.

"If this ain't a curio, I should like to know what is!" said a seaman.

"It's a bit of a gownd, that's what *I* say it is!" exclaimed another authoritatively. "Think I can't tell what a woman's dress is like?"

"My notion is," said an old man, standing aloof, "that there ain't nothing mortal about it at all, but that it's just a bit of bunting hoisted by death, to let the people as was in the boat know who their proper skipper was. I hope nobody means to bring it into the forecastle. I'll not go a-nigh it for one."

"Bring that thing aft here!" called Anderson; "and turn to there and get about your work."

The men dispersed, and the watch below rolled into the fore-castle, talking under their breaths, and making each other miserable with horrid legends of fire, disease, drowning, and starvation.

The night came. The "Jessie Maxwell" was heeling over to a spanking breeze, and in her cabin the lamp was lighted, and Captain Duff and his chief officer, an Orkney Islander named Banks, a huge, rough, shaggy, honest-looking being, as like a Newfoundland dog as it is possible for a man to be, sat, each with a big glass of whisky and water at his elbow, smoking pipes.

Here was a very different interior from what

the "Meteor" had presented. The cabin was about twenty feet long and six feet high, with a broad skylight overhead, and half a dozen sleeping berths around. No gilt and cream colour, nor polished panels, nor Brussel carpets, nor the hundred elegancies of decoration and furniture, that made the "Meteor's" cuddy as pretty as a drawing-room, were to be found; but solid snuff-coloured doors, with stout hair-cushioned sofas on either side the table, which travelled up and down a couple of portly stanchions, that, when it was not wanted, could be stowed out of the road. But how suggestive, every plank and beam that met the eye, of strength and durability! Here was a vessel fit to trade in any seas, well manned, with a snugly-stowed cargo, not a quarter of a ton in excess of what she ought to carry,



commanded by a shrewd and able seaman out of Glasgow, and by two mates as competent as himself.

The steam from the toddy mingled the fragrance of lemon and honest Glenlivet with the more defined aroma of cavendish tobacco. The captain sat on one sofa and Banks on the other ; and they smoked and sipped, and looked steadfastly on one another, as if time were altogether too precious to be wasted in conversation, which must oblige them to devote their lips to other purposes than the pipe-stem and the tumbler.

“I think I did well to get that boat inboard,” said the skipper presently ; “a boat’s a boat.”

There was no controverting this position ; so Mr. Banks acquiesced with a nod, which he executed like Jove, in a cloud.

"Do you remember the time, Banks," observed the skipper after a long pause, "when little Angus McKay spun us that yarn in the 'Bannockburn,' about his falling in with a ship's long-boat off the Cape of Good Hope, with a nigger boy and three sheep aboard of her?"

Mr. Banks, after deep deliberation, replied that he minded the story weel.

"A verra curious circumstance," continued the skipper, "if it wasn't a lee!"

"Inteet it was."

Another pause, during which the two men sucked their pipes, never remitting their steadfast gaze at each other, unless to turn their eyes upon the tumblers before raising them to their lips.

"Mr. Sherman seems to know what he is about," said Captain Duff. "He has a fund of humanity in his bosom, and I like

to reflect, sir, on his sitting by the poor de'il's bed watching by him as though he were his ain son."

Nothing could have been more *à propos* than this remark, if it were designed to reach the ear of the gentleman referred to; for, as the captain spoke, one of the snuff-coloured doors was opened, and Mr. Sherman came out.

"Hoo's the patient?" asked the captain.

"He has his senses, though there is such a bewildered look on his face as I don't think I ever saw on the human countenance," replied Mr. Sherman, seating himself near the skipper, and looking about for a tumbler; whereat Mr. Banks called in a hurricane-note for "Atam," meaning Adam. A small red-headed man emerged from somewhere and placed the materials

for a glass of whisky toddy before Mr. Sherman.

"Ech!" ejaculated the skipper, "I dare say he *is* puzzled. So would I be if my last memory left me starving in an open boat and my next one found me warm in bed with the flavour of old Nantz brandy in my inside."

"I have asked him no questions," continued Mr. Sherman. "I know enough of doctoring to understand that his life may depend upon rest and silence."

"My word, sir, you are a very gude-hearted man!" exclaimed the skipper; "and if ever I am shipwrecked, may it be my luck to fall into just such hands as yours. Your health, sir."

Saying which, he half-emptied his tumbler, a performance that made his merry eyes glisten with delight.

“And the other man is ted?” said Mr. Banks.

“Quite dead, poor soul! Did you ever see anything more heart-rending than his body, captain? Mere skin and bone—and, oh! sir, the expression of his face!” exclaimed Mr. Sherman, holding his hands over his eyes a moment.

“Thirst is an awfu’ thing,” said the skipper, glancing at his tumbler.

“And so is hunger,” observed Mr. Banks, who looked as though a whole ox might hardly serve him for a meal.

“I expect, when the other poor fellow is capable of speaking, that we shall hear a terrible tale,” said Mr. Sherman. “It is very providential that my slight knowledge of medicine should qualify me to deal with him. The greatest care is required in treating persons nearly dead of starvation.

I have fed him so far in spoonfuls only. It is my intention to remain with him through the night. I'll borrow one of your easy-chairs, captain, which will serve me very well for a bed."

"Certainly. I am sleeping close at hand, and if you want me, just give my cot a shove, and I'll be out of it before you can tell which side I drop from."

This settled, the captain mixed himself another tumbler of spirits, refilled his pipe, and entered into speculations as to Holdsworth's nationality, the length of time he had been in the boat, the probable longitude and latitude in which the ship had taken fire or foundered, with many other matters, all of which he relieved with long pauses, and a variety of thoughtful puffs and attentive glances at the light through the medium

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of his tumbler. Presently four bells—ten o'clock—struck, which made Mr. Banks rise from his seat, wish his companions “Coot night,” and withdraw to his cabin to get a couple of hours’ sleep before his watch came on. The others remained chatting for half an hour, and then the skipper went on deck to have a look around before turning in for the night.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HOLDSWORTH'S RECOVERY.

THE cabin in which Holdsworth lay was a spare one, next the captain's. It was lighted by an oblong piece of frosted glass let into the deck overhead, and by a port-hole which was a standing and comfortable illustration of the immense thickness of the timbers that separated the inmate from the sea. There was a square of cocoa-nut matting on the deck to tread on; up in a corner an immovable washstand, containing a pewter basin; a row of pegs against the door; and a mahogany bunk.



In this bunk lay Holdsworth, and at the hour of which I am now writing, Mr. Sherman sat beside him in an easy-chair, his legs up and his head back, in a deep sleep. From the centre of a beam hung a small oil-lamp, the flame carefully protected by wire network; and the light diffused by this lamp was clear enough to exhibit Holdsworth's face distinctly.

He, too, was asleep, if sleep that can be called which, plunging the senses into unconsciousness, yet leaves pain and misery to play their active part upon the darkened stage of the mind. Of his youth, of his beauty, I might almost say of his very manhood—such as was wont to be suggested by the open, brave, and winning expression of his face—not a trace was left. The spoliation of suffering had been so complete, that the bare wreck of the

noble temple it had ruined was all that remained. Now, even more completely than in his waking hours, might we master the full extent of the cruel transformation that had been wrought, since the candour of sleep was on the slumberer, and the self-consciousness that masks the subtle facial truths, inactive. His hair, formerly dark and luxuriant, was thinned about the forehead, was tangled and coarse, and mixed with gray and white. The protrusion of the cheek-bones formed a conspicuous feature ; under them the flesh fell into a hollow, and, as much of it as the bristly moustache and whiskers suffered to be seen, was puckered and dried up like the rind of an old winter apple. The underlip was enlarged, and entirely altered the remembered aspect of the mouth. The eyebrows drooped where they had formerly

arched, and the hair of them near the temples had fallen off. Time might, perhaps, efface some of these disfigurements deep-graven by the stylet of pain ; but no man could have looked upon that sleeping face without a conviction of the permanency of much that he beheld.

He slept ; but though his slumber was deep, his movements were so restless, convulsive, and feverish, that it seemed every moment as if he must start up.

Once during the night the ship's bell sounding seven awakened him, and he opened his eyes and raised his head, but soon let it fall again. Then it was during this short interval of wakefulness that the bewildered look of which Mr. Sherman had spoken might have been perceived ; and it lingered for some minutes on his face after he had dropped asleep once more.

Several times during the night the kind-hearted man who watched by the poor fellow's side rose from his chair, and scrutinised him anxiously ; and once Mr. Banks popped his shaggy head in to ask how the sufferer did, but found both patient and doctor asleep.

The morning crept over the sky, and turned the port-hole and the piece of deck-glass white ; and at six o'clock Mr. Sherman woke, and crept quietly to his cabin to refresh himself with a plunge in cold water ; then went on deck, where he found the captain smoking a cigar, his feet in galoshes, and the hands washing down. A sparkling, genial morning, with a warm breeze from the west, the barque in full sail, and the green seas caressing her bows, and leaping back from their keen salute in avalanches of foam. Longitude, 25° 12' W.; latitude,

22° 4' N.; a glorious climate, and the ship's course S.S.E.

"Good morning, Mr. Sherman," said the skipper. "This is the weather, eh, sir? Out of the Doldrums by Tuesday week, I hope. How's your patient?"

"Sleeping soundly. He has passed a good night. If he can only get over the next few days, the tropical sun will set him to rights."

"Is he awake now?"

"I think not. But we'll go and see if you like."

The captain threw away his cigar and followed Mr. Sherman below, not however before casting a look above and around, and singing out to the man at the wheel to "keep her at that."

Opening the cabin door they crept to the bunk and stood looking at the sleeping

man, who, aroused perhaps by the magnetic influence of four eyes upon him, started and stared up at them from his pillow.

Captain Duff drew back a step, scared a little by the wild gaze that Holdsworth fixed upon him, and which was made in some measure repellent by his gaunt and wasted face, and by the pitiable expression of bewilderment that passed slowly into it, and made it almost as meaningless as an idiot's.

"How do you feel, my poor fellow?" asked Mr. Sherman; "stronger, I hope?"

Holdsworth made no answer, but knitted his brow with an air of profound perplexity, gazed slowly round him, then attentively at Mr. Sherman, then at the skipper, then at himself, finally pressing his hand to his head.

"How do you know he is English?"

Perhaps he don't understand you," said Captain Duff.

"I heard him mutter in English before I joined you last night," answered Mr. Sherman.

"Pray tell me where I am?" said Holdsworth, in a faint voice.

"That's English!" exclaimed the captain, though he looked as if he must take a thought of it yet, before he should allow himself to feel sure.

"You are among friends," replied Mr. Sherman softly, and in a voice full of sympathy; "on board a vessel called the 'Jessie Maxwell,' bound to Australia. We sighted your boat yesterday morning."

"My boat!" whispered Holdsworth, with an expression on his face of such deep bewilderment that it was painful to behold it.

"Do you not remember?"

"My boat! my boat!" repeated Holdsworth; but no light came into his eyes to show that he apprehended the other's meaning.

"He has lost his memory," said Mr. Sherman aside to the captain. And then to Holdsworth: "Do you feel as if you could eat anything?"

"Yes, I am hungry," answered Holdsworth.

"That is a good sign!" exclaimed Mr. Sherman, cheerfully. "Captain, will you stop here a few minutes, while I ask the steward to get the soup heated?"

The skipper being left alone, stationed himself near the door, and watched Holdsworth with mixed emotions. Brave to foolhardiness in a gale of wind, on a lee-shore, in confronting a mutinous crew, in



dealing with the severest of marine exigencies, this little gentleman, in some trivial matters, was as timorous as a mouse, and would have made his escape overboard, rather than be grasped by Holdsworth, who, if he were not the dissembled madman his ragged, withered face suggested him to be, was still hedged about with enough of mysterious and secret horror to make him awful in the practical little Scotchman's eyes.

Meanwhile, Holdsworth rested upon his pillow, casting eager and restless glances about the cabin, and at the skipper, and battling with an oblivion of the past as thick and as impenetrable as that mystery of being which the infant emerges from at its birth.

"Tell me, sir, who I am—where I have been taken from!" he exclaimed, presently,

looking with imploring eyes at the skipper.

"Indeed, my man, I can't tell you who you are," replied the captain, wishing that Mr. Sherman would return, or that a squall would give him an excuse to withdraw. "All that I know is, we found you in a boat, and picked you up, and that the gentleman who has just gone out, saved your life."

"Strange!" muttered Holdsworth; "I remember nothing."

"Oh, it will all come if you give it time. Memory often leaves people after a bad illness, but returns again with the strength. Ech!" he cried, struck, as though for the first time, by the poor creature's lean and hollow face. "But you have kenn'd some awfu' times, man, since ye last stood upon honest shipboard.

Sailoring, if you are a sailor, is a poor look-out when it comes to wanting bread and water."

The door opened and Mr. Sherman came in, followed by the steward bearing a dish of soup and some mild brandy and water, with which Mr. Sherman proceeded to feed Holdsworth. When as much of the soup as was thought good had been administered, Mr. Sherman bade his patient turn his back to the light and get some sleep.

"I will, sir; thank you for your kindness," returned Holdsworth, with affecting docility. "But, first, will you help me—will you help me to recall something—anything—to give my mind rest? I can see nothing for the darkness that is over me."

"I have told him that his memory will

come back with his strength," said Captain Duff.

"Yes, have a little patience!" exclaimed Mr. Sherman. "We will get you on deck in a day or two, and when you see the boat we took you from your memory will return to you."

"Can you not tell me my name?" asked Holdsworth, with that striking expression of painful anxiety you may see on the face of a blind man deserted by his guide and totally at fault.

"We will endeavour to find it out," replied Mr. Sherman. "Come, captain, our friend must talk no more, or all our trouble to get him well will be of no use."

Holdsworth put out his hand with a smile of gratitude that softened and almost sweetened his miserable and skeleton-like

face ; then turned in his bunk and closed his eyes.

“ A strange thing to happen to a man,” said the captain to Mr. Sherman, as they went on deck. “ I never could have believed that the memory of a creature could go out of his brain like that ! ”

“ We may guess the nature and magnitude of his sufferings by this effect,” answered Mr. Sherman. “ God alone knows how many days he may have passed in that boat, and what scenes of horror he has witnessed and what torments he has endured. But we must help his memory as far as we can. Will you allow me to go forward and examine the boat ? ”

They walked to the main-deck, where the boat was stowed. A little knot of

men gathered around and watched their movements with interest. But, in truth, the boat was as unsuggestive as a sheet of blank paper. There was no name in her ; nor by her build, sail, oars, shape, or anything else, was it possible to tell her paternity. The broken bottles and bags of bread that had been fished out of her locker were in her bottom, but no clue was to be got from them ; nothing but a story of deepest tragical misery. The captain sent for the shawl that had been unhitched from the mast-head, and he and Mr. Sherman held it open between them and inspected it. Brownd by the wet and the heat—in its frayed and tattered shape, its very texture modified by exposure—it was positively no more than a black rag.

They returned to the after-deck, and

sent the steward for the clothes which had been removed from the two men. Holdsworth's pilot coat was of good quality, and his linen also seemed to suggest that he had held a very superior position to that of Johnson, whose dress was a sailor's, a brown woollen shirt, serge trousers, boots with high tops, and the invariable belt and knife. Holdsworth's linen was marked with H; nothing more. They found in his pockets a watch, a clasp-knife, some money, and one or two other articles, which Mr. Sherman made into a parcel, hoping that the sight of things which would be familiar might help the poor fellow's memory.

"It is evident," says the skipper, "that whatever we are to learn must come from the man himself. His clothes tell us nothing."

“They are a sailor’s, don’t you think?”

“Why, they are such clothes as I or Banks might wear; but that don’t prove that the man was a sailor. He certainly hasn’t a nautical cut.”

“His language is that of an educated man, and his linen is that of a gentleman. Pray God that the poor soul’s memory will return. Without it he will be scarcely better off with us than he was in the boat.”

“Eh?” cried the literal skipper, “not better off with good meat and drink and a good bunk to lie in, than when he was perishing of thirst, with no better blanket than the sky to cover him?”

“I mean that he may have friends at home who, while his memory remains torpid, must be as dead to him and he



to them, as if he had remained in his open boat."

"Yes, I see your idea, sir," replied the skipper. "And now about the other puir creature. We must bury him this morning. He is dead, you say?"

"We will go and look at him."

"Why," returned Captain Duff, shrinking, "to tell you the plain truth, I am not over fond of these girning bodies. By your leave, sir, I'll hae the puir creature sewn up in canvas, and if you'll tak' the reading of the Burial office I shall feel obliged, Mr. Sherman, as I have but a varra moderate capacity for the delivery o' written words."

At this juncture, Adam, the steward, rang the breakfast-bell, and the captain and Mr. Sherman went below.

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There is scarcely any ceremony more impressive than a burial at sea ; perhaps because nowhere does man feel his littleness more than when the mighty ocean surrounds him. The graves of the dead on shore in a measure localise their inmates, and our associations are fortified by the power of referring to the departed as beings who slumber in green places, and are at all seasons visitable.

But a burial at sea is the launching of the dead into infinity. The sense of his extinction is absolute. He is swallowed up and annihilated by the universe of water, which also seems to overwhelm his very memory.

At twelve o'clock the body of Johnson, sewn up in canvas, with a weight of lead attached to his feet, lay extended upon one of the gratings of the main-hatchway,

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one end resting on the bulwarks of the ship, the other upon the shoulders of two sailors. The crew stood round, holding their caps in their hands ; and near the body stood Mr. Sherman, reading the Burial Service. The mournful and impressive spectacle was greatly heightened by the tolling of the bell on the quarter-deck, which mingled its clear chimes with the words delivered by Mr. Sherman. The vessel was sailing on an even keel, her white sails swelling and soaring one above another, and forming a lovely picture against the bright blue sky. The water leaped and sparkled and frothed against her clean sides, and those swallows of the deep, the stormy petrels, chased her flashing wake, and gave by their presence a finishing detail to the whole of the sun-lighted scene.

How unutterable the mystery hedging the motionless figure in the canvas shroud—his name unknown, a waif of dead humanity snatched for a brief moment from the imperious deep, whose will it was to keep him! The seamen sent shrinking glances at the bundle on the grating. That he had suffered; that famine had made a skeleton of him; that thirst had twisted his lean face into an expression of agony which death was powerless to smooth out, was all they knew.

*“We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption——”*

The captain motioned with his hand; the grating was tilted, and its burden went like a flash from the bulwarks; the steersman turned his face upon his shoulder, hearing the hollow plunge; but those on the main-deck stood without a move among

them, listening to the final, comfortable, glorious words :—

*“ Looking for the resurrection of the body (when the sea shall give up her dead), and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who at His coming shall change our vile body, that it may be like His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.”*

The reader closed the book ; the grating was restored to its place ; and the men in twos and threes moved slowly forward, talking in subdued tones ; and for the remainder of that day at least no sound of loose laughter or reckless words was to be heard in the fore-castle.

## CHAPTER V.

“NO LIGHT, BUT RATHER DARKNESS, VISIBLE.”

HOLDSWORTH regained his strength slowly, and on the fourth day Mr. Sherman, who attended him with the gentle and unobtrusive solicitude of a perfectly benevolent mind, suggested that a visit on deck might freshen him up and contribute to his recovery.

To this Holdsworth had been looking forward with indescribable eagerness, believing that the sight of the boat of which Mr. Sherman had spoken would recall his memory. His mind, indeed, presented a

phenomenon. He remembered nothing—literally *nothing*. His actual life, as he was then living it, practically dated from the moment of the return of his consciousness. All that had gone before was pitch darkness. That the faculty of memory was not *dead*, was proved by his capacity to remember his thoughts and feelings, the offices and faces of those who waited on him, the food he had eaten, the names of those he conversed with, during the time he had been in the cabin of the barque. But behind this was impenetrable gloom, every glance at which tortured him, so inexplicable was his helplessness to penetrate it.

The mind of an infant has been likened to a sheet of blank paper; we may extend the image in Holdsworth's case by conceiving that all the characters which ex-

perience had written upon his mind had been effaced, and that, what new characters there were upon it, were the impressions only which he had received since he had been awakened from the deadly stupor that had conquered him a few hours before his rescue.

Mr. Sherman was fully persuaded that Holdsworth's memory would return with his strength; and had therefore foreborne from making any experiments by questions or allusions until the time should come when the renewal of health would enable the sufferer to sustain the fatigue of thought. He was impressed and touched by the poor fellow's docility, his sweetness of temper, and his gratitude, which moved him to tears as often as he attempted to express it. But no clue was to be obtained from his conversation as to the profession he had

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followed.\* There was not a shoppish expletive in his language. He named things after the established prescription of Johnson's dictionary, and might as well have been a clerk, a dentist, a builder, a Member of Parliament, or even an attorney, as a sailor.

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\* I would respectfully protest against the portraits of sailors which are transmitted from time to time to the public through the circulating libraries. The air of knowledge with which these absurdities are delivered, and the confiding manner in which they are received, make them peculiarly ridiculous in the eyes of men who have been to sea—not as passengers, but as sailors. They are for the most part as faithful copies of the originals, as the lords and ladies of the penny serials are faithful copies of the English nobility. I beg to assure these writers that captains and officers of large ships do not, when ashore, talk of the floor of their bedrooms as the quarter-deck; do not speak of time as bells; do not describe young ladies by nautical terms, such as clean lines, flowing sheets, a good figure-head, &c.; do not hitch up their breeches and turn quids; do not shiver their timbers on every occasion; nor perform, indeed, any of the ridiculous posture-making which their faithful portraits execute in the pages of novels written by gentlemen who would seem never to have travelled farther west than Battersea. Sailors may be deficient in many of the social virtues which endear us to the drawing-room and the tea-table, but they are not snobs.

The "Jessie Maxwell" was now in the hot latitudes. The fourth day was lovely, with a north-east breeze on the port quarter, and a burning sun, from which an awning protected the deck. An easy chair was placed near the skylight for Holdsworth, who gained the deck, leaning on Mr. Sherman's arm. He halted on the last step of the companion-ladder, and clung to his friend with a look of mingled surprise and fear in his face.

Had there been anyone, among those who watched him with curiosity, who had known him as the chief mate of the "Meteor," he could scarcely have contemplated this wreck of a man without deep emotion. Conceive, if you can, a face with every characteristic that had once contributed to give it manly beauty, wrung out of it by sufferings which had left in-

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effaceable marks on every inch of the whole surface of the countenance. Conceive a stooped and trembling figure, the shoulders forward so as to hollow the chest, and the back bowed like an old man's, the arms lengthened by the abnormal attitude and defeating every faint suggestion of symmetry which the eye might still hope to find. But this expresses nothing of the real transformation that had been wrought; of that subtle modification of expression, of the spiritual conditions of the face, of changes achieved by the most delicate strokes, but which were as effectual as a recasting of the whole figure and countenance could have been. He was dressed partly in his own clothes, partly in some of the clothes belonging to the second mate, who was a slight man, but whose garments hung

loosely on Holdsworth. He wore his own coat, which formerly had buttoned tight across his chest, and which his muscular arms had filled out, as the fingers a glove ; and he could now have buttoned it nearly twice around him. The ring that he had worn on his left hand had slipped from his skeleton finger long ago, when he had been splashing the sea-water over his face in vain endeavour to quench the burning agony in his head and throat. He might have worn Dolly's wedding-ring on his middle finger now, for his hands were indeed scarcely more than bone.

Mr. Sherman eyed him anxiously as he stood tottering at the companion-hatchway. It seemed as if the long-desired revelation had come to the suffering man, and that he could now remember.

"Look about you," he said, "and tell

me if there is anything you see that recalls old impressions."

"I see nothing that does this," replied Holdsworth in a low voice. "Where is the boat I was taken from?"

"On the main-deck yonder."

"I should like to see her," said Holdsworth eagerly. "*One* idea may light up all."

They walked slowly forward. Here and there a seaman repairing a sail, or working in the lower shrouds, or doing one of the endless jobs of splicing, whipping, tarring, cleaning, which are so many conditions of the maritime life, looked at Holdsworth earnestly, but never intrusively; and when he was at the boat some of the hands came up to him with a spokesman, a middle-aged sailor in ear-rings, who said :

"Beg pardon, sir, but all hands wishes

to say as they're werry glad to see you up and doing; and if there's e'er a thing any man among us can do in helping to make you comfortable while you're with us, they'll do it and welcome; and no liberty is intended."

"Thank you, and God bless you!" answered Holdsworth, greatly moved by this speech, and with an expression on his face that could hardly fail to let the honest seamen know that their goodwill was not the less appreciated because it provoked no lengthened reply. The men retired, saying among themselves that, "though the gentleman warn't a sailor, he ought to be one; and though he was nothing but a skeleting, he had as honest a face on him as ever they seed."

"This is the boat," said Mr. Sherman.

Holdsworth steadied himself by holding

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on to the gunwale and looked into it. The bags of bread lay under the aftermost thwart; there was the open locker which the sea had filled with water; there were the empty kegs, whose hollow rollings, as the boat had swayed to and fro, had formed such suggestive notes of torture, as one might think would nevermore depart from the ear that had received the echo. If there were impressions like red-hot brands to sear the mind with burning transcripts of the ugly agonising facts they counterfeited, one, if any of them, would surely be the impression conveyed by the scenes of which the interior of the boat had been the theatre. Here the widow had died, with her arm hanging over the side; yonder the general had expired, pointing to the phantom of his native town, which dying memory had evoked from the air; from

that spot the actor had leaped ; and on that seat the boy had died, holding out his hands to the sinking sun. The little arena should have been vital with memory, so small was the space in which infinite human misery had been packed. But to Holdsworth it conveyed no ideas. Not the faintest illumination entered his face in surveying it. To Mr. Sherman it was a thousandfold more significant than to Holdsworth, who was the chief actor in the heart-breaking tragedy that had been enacted in it. Yet he knew that it *ought* to have an interest for him ; and he stood clutching and staring at it, with a frowning forehead, wrestling wildly with his mind, in which the corpse of memory lay deep and hidden.

After a long interval he passed his hand across his eyes, and turned to Mr. Sherman.



"It will not come," he said.

Mr. Sherman was both disappointed and astonished ; disappointed by the fruitless result of an inspection, the good effect of which he had counted upon, and astonished by this phenomenon of the utter extinction of the most life-giving faculty of the mind.

He drew him to the boat again, and said :

"See now ; you were found there, lying under that seat, and beside the mast lay another man, a dark-faced man, dressed in sailor's clothes. Do you remember ?"

"No."

"Look at those bags of biscuit. They were found soaking in the locker. Those bags contained all the food you had on board. You must have suffered horribly from the dread of starvation when you

found the biscuit spoilt by the salt water. Recall your thoughts on making the discovery. Can you?"

"No," replied Holdsworth, pressing his hand to his head.

"There was a black flag—a piece of stuff, a portion of a woman's dress it seemed—fastened to the mast-head. Do you remember?"

Holdsworth said "No."

"Had you a woman with you?"

"I cannot tell."

"See if you can go farther back. Try to recollect where your ship sailed from. Was it England?"

"England? Yes—I know England—but I do not remember if I came from England," Holdsworth replied, with profound anxiety in his eyes.

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"Come! you remember England! Did you sail from Liverpool?"

"I know Liverpool!" he exclaimed quickly.

"And London?"

"Yes! yes!"

"And what was the name of your ship?"

Holdsworth thought and thought without avail.

Herein was the deception that misled Mr. Sherman. Holdsworth could perfectly remember familiar names, but they had to be pronounced in his hearing before he could recall them. In like manner he could tell the names and discourse of the things he beheld, *because he saw them*. Had Johnson lived, he would have known and called him Johnson. Had Mr. Sherman spoken of Dolly, of Southbourne,

of the London Docks, of the "Meteor," of any of the incidents connected with the "Meteor's" loss, Holdsworth would have remembered exactly as much as he heard. But, in the absence of suggestion, his memory was powerless—absolutely helpless—to generate independent conclusions as to the impressions his mind had received previous to his rescue.

The real miracle lay in *this* contradiction—in the death of memory, dating *up to* the moment of the swoon in the boat; in its resurrection to health and vigour, dating *from* the moment of his recovery.

He returned to the chair that had been placed for him near the skylight, and Mr. Sherman, still not despairing of arousing this dormant faculty, went below and returned with the parcel of things that had been taken from Holdsworth's pockets.

These were given him one by one, but he handled them without recognition.

"But you know their names?" said Mr. Sherman.

"Yes. This is a knife. This is a watch."

"They are yours; found in your pockets."

His hand trembled, and he gazed at them with devouring eyes; but no other idea was conveyed to him by Mr. Sherman's assurance than the bare fact that they were his property. He could not remember having purchased or owned them.

"It's only a question of time, my man," said Captain Duff, who stood by looking on at these strange ineffectual experiments.

No mere effort of imagination can do justice to Holdsworth's suffering. The feeling that he *ought* to remember, coupled

with his incapacity and the sense of the past holding, perhaps, memories of vital consequence to him to recall, created a mental torture more afflicting than it is in the power of any man, who has not suffered in this way, to conceive. Loss of memory, even in trifling matters, always partakes of the nature of pain. The fruitless effort to recall a name, a date, begets uneasiness, and is soon converted into a positive torment. But figure your mind haunted with a sense of the significance of the past, not one faintest glimpse of which it is permitted to you to obtain. Figure yourself groping in a dense gloom, saying : "There are things here which I *feel* are precious to me, which are of deep consequence to my happiness and to the happiness of others, but I cannot recall their names or their aspect!" and mean-

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while the subtlest of your instincts is driving you mad with importunities to prosecute your search and lay the store of memory open to the light ! This is worse than blindness ; it is death in life. The years that you have lived are cut away from your existence, and with them all the precious accumulations of experience —love, sorrow, and thought itself. God preserve us all from such an affliction !

## CHAPTER VI.

### SAILORS' SYMPATHY.

THE "Jessie Maxwell" was bound for Sydney, New South Wales, freighted with what is called a general cargo—pianos, nails, scents, and such matters. She carried only one passenger, Mr. Sherman, whose cabin was given him as a favour by Captain Duff, who partly owned the barque, and who had a great friendship for the gentleman, whose house he visited in Sydney. Mr. Sherman was a merchant, doing business in wool, tallow, and other Australian exports, and had been visiting

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London and Glasgow for agents and consignees, and also to benefit his health by a sea voyage. He was one of the most humane men in the colony, very well to do, but prosperous by his own efforts. He had a commanding figure, a large, mild, intellectual eye, and the kindest smile that ever graced the human face. The strong benevolence of his character made his manner singularly fascinating; and before Holdsworth had known him a fortnight, he was bound to him by a feeling of affection which, though it might have owed something of its depth to gratitude, must have existed in a complete form, without reference to the great kindness that had been shown him.

The days passed quickly. In the equatorial latitudes the barque was becalmed for two days; and then a gale rose, and

drove her into the south-east trade-winds.

If Mr. Sherman and Captain Duff had ever felt disposed to believe that Holdsworth might have been a sailor, they considered that probability entirely disposed of by his behaviour on the first day of the gale.

He was on deck when the wind was freshening, walking to and fro with Mr. Sherman, whose arm he could now do without, having recovered as much of his strength as it seemed likely he would ever get back. The wind came up in a sudden squall, and took the barque on the starboard beam. Her royals were set, but the yards fortunately were trimmed to receive the breeze. The vessel heeled over under the great weight of canvas, and there was some hurry amongst the men as they let go

the royal and topgallant halliards, though there was nothing in the confusion to occasion the least alarm, even in a passenger who had been a month at sea. But the effect of the squall upon Holdsworth was extraordinary. As the vessel lay over, he grasped Mr. Sherman's arm with looks of terror in his face, and ran to windward, flinging fearful glances at the sea on the lee side. Mr. Sherman offered to help him to go below, but he declined to leave the deck, and clung to the weather mizzen rigging, apparently speechless with alarm.

As it came on to blow heavily, the men reefed the topsails; and Holdsworth literally trembled as the yards rushed down upon the caps, and the canvas thundered as the steersman luffed to enable the hands to pick up the sails more easily.

“My dear friend,” exclaimed Mr.

Sherman soothingly, "you must endeavour to control yourself. There is no danger, indeed. This uproar will cease presently. We encountered much worse weather than this in the North Atlantic, shortly after leaving Glasgow."

"Yes, I am ashamed of my weakness; my nerves are gone," answered the poor fellow. And then, seeing the men tumbling up aloft and laying out upon the yards, he covered his face with his hands, saying he dared not look, lest he should see them fall.

The ship was made snug presently; but the sea rose, and now and again a shower of spray came flying over the forecastle and the main-deck, which so violently agitated Holdsworth that he let go the rigging and made for the companion. He walked like a paralysed man: his hands

outstretched, and his head turning about on his shoulders. He gained his cabin and laid himself down in his bunk, exquisitely alive to his pusillanimity, and weeping over his incapacity to control himself.

The skipper went up to Mr. Sherman.

"Our friend is no sailor. I think you can tell *that*, Mr. Sherman?"

"No; that is proved. The instincts of his old life, had he been a sailor, would have kept up his courage without respect of his memory. But let us bear in mind that his nervousness is the result of the terrible experience he has gone through. If illness—if fever, for instance—will rob us of our nerves, how much more the unspeakable agony of hunger and thirst, and the deadly, hopeless captivity and exposure in an open boat for days, and maybe for weeks? It would drive me mad!"

“Ay, that is verra true. Understand me, I am not speaking disrespectfully of the puir soul. I would only bid you obsairve by his fear that he canna hae been a tarry-breeks. The auld speerit would live in spite o’ his nerves, and would have risen to the cries of the men and the bocking o’ the water. That’s my opeenion.”

Thus we may learn how some opinions, delivered in sound earnest, are manufactured.

Not a tarry-breeks !

There had never sailed out of any port in Christendom a finer, a more courageous sailor than Holdsworth. What would Captain Duff have thought of his “opeenion,” had he been told that that same halting, crippled figure, who had hastened to his cabin with movements full of fear, had

been, only a month before, an upright, handsome man, with an eye full of light and spirit, with nerves and skill equal to occasions which would have overwhelmed the honest Scotch skipper and left him nowhere, with a heart as gentle as a maiden's and manly as Nelson's; always foremost in the moment of danger, with the voice of a trumpet to deliver unerring commands; a leader in measures of which the peril made the stoutest-hearted tremble and stand still; scaling the dizzy heights of whirling masts and spars, to whose summits he might have beckoned in vain to those very seamen of the "Jessie Maxwell," whose movements, now in the weakness of his crushed and broken life, he dared not even watch?

Of all sights, that of the strong and lion-hearted man, smitten down by sick-

ness, by misery, by misfortune to the feebleness of an infant, to the timidity of a girl, is surely the most affecting. Such a man I have seen — a sailor — entering the forecastle full of the courage that makes heroes of men, and leaving it, after two months of confinement, with nerves and health so shattered, that he has not dared to approach the bulwarks of the ship for fear of falling overboard !

Give the full measure of your pity, kind reader, to such as these. There is no form of human suffering whose pathos is more unqualified.

So Mr. Sherman, agreeing with Captain Duff, was confident that whatever else Holdsworth might have been, he was not a sailor. This was, at all events, a negative discovery, which lopped off one of the numerous conjectures with which the



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mystery of Holdsworth's past was considered. Strange it was to talk to the poor fellow, to hear his rational language, his discussions, his sensible remarks, and to feel that he was speaking, so to say, on this side of a curtain, behind which were hidden all the true interests of his life. Once or twice he staggered Captain Duff by a nautical question, the very nature of which implied an intimate acquaintance with the sea; but his unaffected timidity when the vessel rolled, or when the weather was squally, always drove the skipper back upon his first conclusion, and made him think that the knowledge of sails, ropes, yards, &c., which Holdsworth displayed, had been picked up by him as a passenger, or even out of books.

However, his marine allusions were few

and far between. His horror of the sea was remarkable, and he repeatedly inquired how long it would be before they reached Sydney. Moreover, he was rendered taciturn by his ceaseless struggles with memory; and would pass whole hours lost in thought, during which, it was observed, no gleam ever entered his face to indicate his recurrence to any action, phase, or condition of his past.

Often, when the main-deck was clear, he would steal to the boat and stand contemplating her with his hands locked, and his brow corrugated with anxious thought. It was strange to see him running his eyes over her, handling the yoke-lines, peering into the locker, and literally groping for an inspiration.

Once, the boatswain of the vessel, a shrewd English seaman, who, as well as

every other soul on board the barque, knew of Holdsworth's total loss of memory, seeing him alone staring at the boat, came out of his berth, and addressed him :

" They say, sir, that you don't remember this boat ? "

" I am trying to recollect," answered Holdsworth, looking at him with the expression of painful eagerness that was now almost a characteristic of his face.

" See here, sir, when that there boat was sighted, there was only two persons found aboard of her. You was one, and the other was the poor fellow we buried. Now, what I'm always saying to my mates is this : this here's a ship's quarter-boat, and more hands went in her than two when she put off. Now, sir, try and think how many there was."

"I remember nothing. I would to God I could!"

"But don't you reck'let what your thoughts was when the bread got soaked with the salt water?"

Holdsworth shook his head.

"Here," continued the good-natured boatswain, "might be the bread," pointing to the locker. "Here," he went on, pointing to the stern-sheets, "might you be sitting, steering of her; when up comes a sea and washes over you or the chap that has the yokes. Now, may be, you notices this, but can only groan, having to keep her head well before it—putting you for the man as steers. But you can think, for all that; and it must ha' scared the blood out of you to guess that the little food that remained was all spoilt. Can't you remember?"

Holdsworth, who had followed every

syllable with trembling anxiety, shook his head again.

"Many things have happened ; something tells me that," he answered ; "but I can remember nothing."

"Would you like to step into the foks'le, sir ? Perhaps you might see something there as will help you," said the boatswain, who was moved by Holdsworth's hopeless reply.

They descended through the fore-scuttle into the dim semicircular abode, with huge beams across the upper deck, from which depended a number of hammocks, and bunks all around, with their edges chipped and hacked by the men, who used them for cutting tobacco upon ; and on the deck, sea-chests and bundles, and pannikins and tin dishes scattered everywhere. The gloom was scarcely irradiated by a couple of lamps

resembling tea-pots with wicks in their spouts ; and the faces of the men glimmered over the sides of the hammocks or in the darkness of the bunks. Up in a corner was a group of men, consisting of a portion of the watch on deck, assembled around two sea-chests, on which were seated a couple of ordinary seamen, fastened down by nails driven through the seat of their breeches into the lids of the chests. Their sleeves were tucked above the muscles of their arms, and they were deciding, by means of their fists, an argument which had been commenced half an hour before in the main-top. Being nailed very nearly at arm's length from each other, their efforts to deal each other blows threw them into contortions irresistibly ridiculous ; but the lookers-on, having probably no very lively sense of the absurd, stood around with grave

faces, thoughtfully chewing tobacco, and now and then offering the combatants a friendly suggestion where best to hit each other. Some men lay in hammocks directly over the heads of the pugilists, but took no further interest in the proceedings going on under their beds, than now and again to pop a burnt and hairy face over the edge of the tight canvas, and in polite and genteel terms recommend the youngsters not to make too much noise if they didn't want to be nailed fore and aft upon the lids of the chests like bats.

"Now, sir," said the boatswain, advancing a few steps into the forecabin, but not even deigning to notice, much less offering to interfere, between the combatants, "see if there ain't nothing here to give you an idea."

There should have been many things ;

for the forecastle of a ship was as familiar to Holdsworth as any part of her; and though, when he had first gone to sea, he had slept in a cabin near his father's, he had spent the greater part of his time forward among the men, taking instructions from them in all kinds of seafaring work, and never more happy than when squatting on a chest, plying a marlin-spike, and listening to the yarns of the sailors around him.

The boatswain watched him with looks of interest, which faded into disappointment.

"Is there nothing?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Holdsworth, gazing blankly around him.

"But you know those things are called hammocks?"

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“Yes, I can tell you the names of everything that I see, but that don’t help me.”

“Well, I *am* blowed!” muttered the boatswain, under his breath; whereupon Holdsworth, thanking him for the trouble he had taken, withdrew, pained by the glances and whispers of the men, and rendered nervous and dispirited by the smells, the fight in the corner, and the strong movement of the ship, felt here more than anywhere else.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PRESENTATION.

Nor knowing how to address or speak to Holdsworth, the skipper and Mr. Sherman and the others called him Mr. H., that letter being all they knew of his name.

He was treated by captain and officers with great kindness, shared their table, and was even furnished by them with clothes, of which, you may conceive, he stood very much in need.

None of them could doubt that he had friends, that he held a position, that he might have money ; and they waited day

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after day for the return of his memory, which was to solve the mystery his silence wrought, and set him square with the world again. Indeed, his utter incapacity to recall the smallest incident connected with his past, was almost provoking, despite its pathos. Captain Duff wanted to know the name of the vessel that had been wrecked, the port she hailed from, the port she had been bound to, her cargo, who her captain was. How astounding to this healthy little man that such plain and easy questions should provoke no replies. Perhaps, had he been kept without food and water for six or seven days, subjected to a long series of appalling mental tortures, exposed on the sea in an open boat that was scarcely visible a mile off, with Death the skeleton for a helmsman, he might have moderated

his wonderment—nay, even admitted that such experiences were not only highly calculated to deprive a man of his memory, but to drive him raving mad for the remainder of his life.

But the barque was drawing near her journey's end, in long. 120°. The pale outline of Van Diemen's land must heave in sight shortly away on the port bow.

They were now in the beginning of November, and had been seventy-two days from Glasgow. One bright morning Holdsworth was seated on the skylight, with his eyes on a book that had been lent him, but with his mind groping, as it more or less always was, in the darkness that hid the past from his sight. There was a blind man's look on his face when he was thus thinking, that was more conclusive of the ghastly sincerity of his intellectual bereave-

ment than anything that could be said or done. You saw by the blank expression in his eyes that his gaze was turned inwards, and by his general air that the search he was making was a fruitless one.

He had been taken out of the boat a ghost—a gray skeleton ; he had picked up a little since that time, but his present aspect was merely a slight improvement on the forlorn image he had presented when rescued. The familiar picture of a broad-shouldered, hearty, vigorous, handsome young man, smooth-cheeked, clear-eyed, was gone ; in its place was a wasted shadow, a drooping, hesitating figure, with a characterisation of deformity in its movements, though there was no positive deformity ; thin, feeble hands whitened by sickness, and a pale face hollowed in the

eyes, and made ragged with a growth of black beard and moustache.\*

The change was altogether too remarkable to have been effected by physical suffering only; the heart had worked the deeper transformation—the soft, tender, womanly heart brought face to face with sufferings it was constrained to contemplate, to hearken to murmurs of agony it could not soothe nor silence. Consider, I pray you consider, that he had beheld five shocking deaths, each one accompanied by circumstances of unspeakable horror or misery. Stretched over a longer space of time, they might, by giving his heart breathing-spaces between, have inured it to the

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\* "Famine, despair, cold, thirst, and heat, had done  
Their work on them by turns, and thinn'd them to  
Such things a mother had not known her son  
Amidst the skeletons of that gaunt crew."

*Don Juan*, Canto ii. 102.

inevitable scenes ; but crowding upon him one after the other in quick succession, they ground his sensibility to dust, and though he had now no memory whereby to renew the sufferings of those ten days, its blighting effect was not the less clearly visible in him, its operation had not been the less complete.

Whilst he thus sate, as lonely now in a ship full of men as ever he had been in the boat with Johnson dying under the thwart, Mr. Sherman came on deck and took a seat at his side. Holdsworth was so engrossed that he did not perceive his companion, and Mr. Sherman, unwilling to break in upon his thoughts, remained silent, watching him.

Suddenly Holdsworth turned ; the blank dead look went out of his eyes, and he smiled.

"So memory still defies you?" said Mr. Sherman kindly, and with just as much anxiety as would let his companion understand the sincerity of the interest taken in him.

"Yes," answered Holdsworth, the smile fading off his face. "Once — once only, just now, a fancy came into my mind—I cannot explain its nature, or what it betokened, but it vanished the instant I attempted to grapple with it."

"Did it leave no impression—no idea whatever?"

"None. I can compare it to nothing better than a dim light stealing across the wall of a dark room and disappearing."

Mr. Sherman was silent; and presently said :

"What do you propose to do when you reach Sydney?"



"I have often thought of that. I must seek work and wait."

"Wait until your memory returns?"

"Yes."

"The captain and I were talking about you just now, and I suggested that, were you to return to England, which I am persuaded is your native country, you might come across a friend who would give you your memory back at once; or failing such a friend, you might encounter some scene which would achieve the same end."

"I don't think I could bear another long voyage just yet," answered Holdsworth, glancing at the sea. "What should make the water so hateful to me? Sometimes I fancy I must have passed many years upon it, and that it has served me badly."

"Oh, your dislike is easily understood.

mind back to it. It gives me no ideas. I stretch my thoughts over the great waste of waters we have traversed in this ship and find nothing more than sea and sky—sea and sky! I can find no country lying beyond—nothing to give me thoughts of home. Oh, sir!” he cried, “you cannot understand this! How should you? It is horrible for me to look back and see the whole of my life eclipsed—to see a wall of darkness reared close behind me through which I *cannot* see! What things precious, infinitely precious to me, may be hidden! It would ease me, sir, greatly ease me, if God would but illuminate my mind only for a moment, that I might know what is lost to me. And the loneliness of it all!—the feeling of desolation that comes over me in my solitude! Mr. Sherman, consider how lonely I am! Not

a voice, not an echo of anything that may be dear to me, comes out of that darkness behind me. Who would believe that memory is life, and the loss of it worse than death?"

He bowed his head and covered his face with his thin hands, and some tears trickled through his fingers.

God help him! Suffering had subdued that manly nature to the feebleness and weakness of a child, and tears which, there had been a time, when no anguish of his own could have wrung from his eyes, now easily rose with the expression of his feelings.

Here Captain Duff, coming up to Mr. Sherman, interrupted the conversation, and Holdsworth, ashamed of the weakness he had no power to control, went with his slow step and shaky movements below.

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When they were within two days' sail of Sydney, the boatswain and two hands came aft to the skipper, and the boatswain, touching his cap, spoke as follows :

"Sir, the ship's crew have asked me to turn-to and say this here for them : that they werry well know that the gentleman who has lost his memory hasn't any clothes, and, maybe, no money ; and as shipwreck's a thing that may happen to any of us, and as the poor gentleman's suffered more nor he's allowed to remember, though, as my mate Bill here says, it ain't werry hard to guess what he's gone through, as there are some of the men for'ard who have bin short of water in their time, and spin 'arrowing yarns such as I never heerd the like on ; why, what I was a sayin', was this : that the ship's company, barrin' one, which is an Isle o'

Dorg's man—but *he'll* come over—wants to make up a purse o' money for the poor gentleman, and though some o' them ain't got much to give, leastways to spare, they'll all lend a hand, and only wait to hear if you and the mates 'll start the list, which 'ud be more ship-shape."

The boatswain delivered this speech with great hesitation—not from nervousness, but from a perception of the puzzling nature of words, which had a trick of falling athwartships along the course of his meaning, and bringing him up with a round turn. Having concluded, he glanced at his mates to see if they approved, on which they nodded a good deal of hair over their eyes, and then wiped their mouths with their wrists.

"Right you are," said the skipper, ad-

dressing them with his eyes fixed on the main-topsail, and his hand out to motion the man at the wheel to keep her steady. "You can put me down for five pounds, and Mr. Banks and Mr. Anderson for a sovereign apiece. If they don't fork out, I'll pay for them. Steady, I say, steady! Dom it man, you're a point off your course!"

That evening, the weather being mild and balmy, and a glorious breeze right astern of the barque, Holdsworth was seated aft when the skipper came up to him and said:

"The ship's company have been making you up a purse, sir, as a token of their sympathy with the temporal losses you must have sustained by the wreck of the vessel, which there canna' be a doubt you were on board of, and with the suffering

you endured in the boat. The bo'sun waits to know when it'll be agreeable to you to receive the gift."

"No—no—really—the poor fellows must keep their money—I cannot accept it," replied Holdsworth, greatly agitated and moved.

"Oh, you must tak' it, sir, or they'll think you *paughty*, as we say in Scotland. The bo'sun is waiting at the capstan yonder, and the men are on tiptoe for'ard—look at the heads louping in the fore-scuttle!"

Holdsworth left his chair and went slowly to the boatswain. When the hands saw him draw near the capstan, they wriggled out of the forecastle, out of the galley, out from behind the long-boat, and came slipping aft, advancing and drawing back fitfully, and some on tiptoe, to catch the

speeches. A seaman somewhere aloft came hand over fist down a backstay, finally landing himself on the bulwarks, where he stood looking on.

The skipper, and Mr. Sherman, and the second mate approached; and when the boatswain was going to speak, the captain called :

“Draw closer, my lads. The gentleman can’t talk to you out of earshot.”

The men, like shy schoolboys, elbowed each other into a smaller semicircle, and stood staring and grinning over one another’s shoulders.

“All ready, sir?” asked the boatswain.

“Fire away!” answered the skipper.

The boatswain took off his hat and placed it on the capstan; then drew from it a handkerchief of the size of a union-jack, with which he dried his face and mouth;



he next fished in his coat pocket and produced a small canvas bag, very neatly sewn. This he held in his hand, and turned to Holdsworth.

“We don’t know your name, sir, and we’re werry sorry that we don’t, ’cause there’s a great deal in a name when you give a thing, ’specially to them as has to speechify, and it helps ’em along like. (‘So it dew, ’Arry!’ from the crowd, and several heads nodded emphatically.) I’m a seafarin’ man myself, and come from Greenwich, and had no larnin’ taught me when I was a boy, and so the present company will please hexcuse bad grammar and the likes of that, seein’ that a seafarin’ man don’t want to know many words besides those as consarn a ship. We’re all sailors here, if the skipper will let me call him a sailôr——”

“Ma’ conscience! and what else am I?” cried the skipper.

“Well, as I was a sayin’,” continued the boatswain, looking discomfited for a moment, “we’re all sailors here, barrin’ you, sir, and Mr. Sherman, and it’s only men as go to sea as can know what an awful thing a shipwreck is, and what a bad look-out thirst and hunger is, and the feelings that overcome a man when he is in a open boat miles away from the shore. We reckon that you’ve passed through a deal o’ sufferin’, and being sailors, it’s only right and proper that we should all of us, from the skipper down, let you know by a better sign than mere talk, which don’t go far, though it may be werry comfortin’ sometimes, when you can understand what’s said to you—I say that we want to let you know how sorry we are for you, and

how werry grateful we are that we belong to the wessel that picked you up, and so, sir"—here he handed the bag to Holdsworth—"all hands clubbed together to make up this trifle o' money jist to buy you a few things when you get ashore ; and I'm proud to say there ain't a man among us, though I *did* think one was goin' to back out, that hasn't given something—— Beggin' your parding a moment ; them scraps o' paper in the purse are horders wrote by me, and signed by the men as hasn't got ready money about 'em, for the captain to pay you the valley in silver which they bear in figures ; and that money to be deducted from their wages. That's all, I think, sir," he concluded, looking at the skipper.

A voice called out, "Three cheers for the gentleman !" and forth burst a roar

from the iron throats of the men that made the decks ring again.

Holdsworth was unmanned, and looked downwards, struggling with his emotion. But glancing up and catching sight of the swarm of rough, kindly faces around him, he broke away, so to speak, from his agitation, and answered as follows :

“If it had pleased God to leave me my memory, I believe I could have done my gratitude more justice, though I couldn’t have felt more grateful. For, sometimes, when I have watched you at work, it has come over me—not as a conviction—no ! I wish it had ; but as a mere fancy only—that I too have been a sailor ; and if that be so, then I can understand why your kindness does not overcome me with surprise, because I ought to know that sailors’ hearts are the largest, the truest, the most

manly in the world, that there's not a sorrow their purses will not fly open to relieve, and that a man, let him be what he will, is never so well recommended to them as when he is poor and broken down and friendless. I don't know how properly to thank you for your generous gift. ('We don't want no thanks,' said a voice; 'if there's enough to rig you out and put some 'baccy in your pocket, that's all we want.') Miserable, indeed, I shall be if my memory plays me false in this—if it does not suffer me to carry the recollection of your kindness to my death-bed. May God bless you and guard you all back in safety to your homes."

He ceased, unable to say more.

"Sir," said Captain Duff, "we have done no more than our duty in all this business from beginning to end. In the name of all hands I return your good wishes by praying

that God may speedily give you back your memory, and make you happy for the rest of your days, as a proper compensation for what you have gone through."

He shook him by the hand, and then Mr. Anderson stepped forward; then came the boatswain; and then an able seaman; and then another able seaman; until presently Holdsworth was engaged in shaking hands all round, scarcely a man quitting the quarter-deck until a grasp had been exchanged.

When all this hand-shaking was over, Captain Duff ordered rum to be served out to the men, who then returned to the fore-castle with a sense of festivity upon them, and passed the rest of the second dog-watch in singing songs and dancing.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SYDNEY.

AT nine o'clock on the morning of the third day from the time occupied in the last chapter, a hand stationed on the look-out in the fore-top sent a roar from the sky :

“Land right ahead !”

In half an hour's time it was to be seen from the deck, a mere blue vision stretching, eel-shaped, upon the horizon.

Australia ! the great and wealthy continent of which there were men then living whose fathers could recall the time when this vast tract of land had no place in the world's knowledge of the Pacific.

Of all sensations, the first glimpse of the land towards which a ship has been steering for weeks and weeks, with seldom even so much as a passing sail to relieve the monotony of the ocean, is the most thrilling. The oldest seaman will desert his bunk or hammock to make for the fore-castle and have a look at the dim cloud. The pale-faced steward, seldom seen on deck, sneaks from his berth in the steerage redolent of lukewarm soup and resonant with the ceaseless clattering of crockery, to peer over the bulwarks at the far-off coast. If there be passengers on board, you are sensible of an uneasy movement among them, strangely suggestive of mingled excitement and reluctance, as though they were at once eager and loath to quit their floating home, the familiar cabin in which so many hours have been passed, the white



decks which have become to them what the pavement in front of your house is to you. The ship is endeared to them, and the hold she has upon them is felt now that they shall shortly leave her. How nobly she has struggled with the waves and the wind ! What grandeur she assumes when thought of with respect to the immense universe of water she has traversed in safety ! But a few weeks ago, one might say, she was in English waters, and now she is breasting the waves of the antipodes, raising her graceful canvas to the heavens with almost conscious elegance, as though exulting in the knowledge of the feat she has performed—a feat of which no repetition can ever diminish the wonder, the courage, and the triumph.

And now the land loomed large and bold upon the horizon, a gray and iron coast, inhospitable enough to scare away

all rash adventurers, one might think, in search of new homes and brighter fortunes.

What was Captain Duff about? Did he mean to run his ship bow on to those granite-coloured cliffs stretching to right and left, with their swart base margined with a line of crawling foam? Screw your eyes up attentively, and you will see two breaks in the shore. The bowsprit of the "Jessie Maxwell" heads for the break on the right. Slowly the coast grows clearer. That break on the left is but a deceptive hollow, with a vast block of rock lying in the blue, shark-studded water, upon which, many years later, a noble ship called the "Dunbar" shall be wrecked, and, of a great crowd of human beings, but one man saved.

And now behold the miracle of the seaman's art!

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For weeks and weeks, counting from the English summer, the "Jessie Maxwell" has been surrounded by the ocean, directed through light and darkness, through bright sunshine and howling tempests charged with sleet and spray, by no more than a little needle, but gifted with a steadfastness of intelligence more unerring than the loftiest that humanity is endowed with. For weeks and weeks this little needle points and the helmsman obeys, and onwards the ship sails through hundreds of miles of water, until one morning those on board awake and look ahead, and lo! there is the land, with the ship's head pointing accurately towards the little cleft in the coast through which the great Bay of Sydney is to be entered.

This bay is a vision of beauty. No hint of its existence is given until you

have sailed into it. The effect produced by the contrast between the rugged, iron, sterile coast beheld from the sea, and the loveliness of deep-blue water and summer islands richly wooded, and green hills sloping to the water's edge, and sandy creeks, with the heavy bush to the right, and the tropical splendour of vegetation that meets the eye upon the outlying land—all which form the noble bay into which you pass through the narrowest and most repellent of headlands—is not to be described. One might think that Nature had stooped to the human device of a pantomimic surprise, and reared the bleak Australian coast in this latitude for no other reason than to give effect to the grand transformation scene she exhibits behind it.

To the eyes of Holdsworth, wearied by

the eternal glancing or leaping of the sea, how sweet and refreshing were the green shores, the houses peeping out here and there upon the outskirts of the bush, the trees overhanging the margin of the islands like living things never weary of admiring their own shapes! Here and there a boat rowed from shore to shore. Small coasters lay at anchor, their sails clewed up but not furled, and the men lounging drowsily aboard of them. Hark to the humming of the locusts!—comparable to nothing so much as the murmurs of a sleepy congregation reciting the responses in church.

Anon the city of Sydney opened; at its foot a great semicircular basin of water, with the masts of many vessels standing out against the farther houses, and the green hills backing all. How picturesque from a distance the combined colours of the

streaming flags, the white-fronted houses, the green of the hills, and the heavenly azure of the sky! All the way on the left ran the houses into the country beyond, and close at hand were shaggy abutments of wooded land, with deep shady recesses through which the sunlight shimmered on to the emerald ground, with many boats upon the water to give variety and life to the picture. Far, far away, almost like an echo from the old world, the strains of a band playing a hearty English melody could be heard.

No thoughtful man can behold such a colony as this without finding something at once pathetic and inspiring in the spectacle. A great rugged continent, lying hidden in the distant Pacific main, is encountered by human enterprise; and in a few years we witness towns and cities

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thronging its seaboard, and all along the surf-beaten shores is heard the hum of industry. We mark the inalienable love of home, of the mother-country in a thousand tokens, and find the measureless ocean bridged by sympathy and memory, and Old England renewed in such subtle forms as makes us scarcely conscious of our distance from it; though sometimes thought itself, when the thousand leagues of waters that flow between are remembered, seems almost powerless to present our beloved home to us as something real, so vague, so dim, so inaccessiblely remote has it become since we left its shores. Signs of remembered things are about us. We think of the home love which gave that name to that street; which reared yonder house in the likeness of one in the far-off land, that enshrines the

emigrant's most precious memories of childhood; which parcelled out yonder garden in the fashion of the little tract of land in the distant country, whose soil is sacred to the mind as the favoured retreat of a beloved parent. The very nomenclature by which the colonist dignifies some mean spot or small building by the name of a noble city or a spacious edifice in the old home, is full of pathos, since it can signify no more than a deep-rooted affection (not to be weakened or divorced by the harshest recollection of the impracticable struggle for bread which drove whole families across the sea) for England, and a tender impulse to give permanent form to memories which survive through many generations, and create loyalty and patriotism among a people who owe nothing to the country and the sovereign whom



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they reverence, and would at any moment serve. British faces are around us ; British accents sound in our ears ; and on all sides we behold signs of that British courage, audacity, and genius which grow sublime under our gathering appreciation of the difficulties that have been conquered and the triumphs that have been achieved.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HOMEWARD BOUND.

IN the year 1832, within a week or two of the date that would make the time exactly five years since the "Meteor" lay off Gravesend, waiting to embark her captain and start for the port it was her doom never to reach, a large ship was sailing slowly up the river, her poop crowded with passengers, and many heads ranged along her bulwarks.

Far away aft, hard by the wheel, stood a man thickly bearded, dressed in dark clothes, his arms folded, and his eyes bent steadfastly upon the passing shore. He was

alone ; for the rest of the passengers, of which there were many, were grouped about the break of the poop talking to one another excitedly, or pointing to the houses ashore, or watching the steerage passengers on the main-deck cording their boxes, cramming their clothes into bundles, and making preparations for landing that afternoon.

There was something in the expression of this man's face which would have attracted and detained your attention ; a mixture of profound melancholy and struggling surprise, clouded with what might have passed very well for a mood of deep abstraction. His features were thin and haggard, the nose pinched and white, his eyes dark and gleaming, and sunk in hollows, shagged by eyebrows of black hair mingled with white, which met in a perpendicular seam in his forehead. He

presented the appearance of one suffering from some incurable constitutional malady which had wasted the flesh off his bones, arched his back, hollowed his chest, and brought into his face a permanent expression of mingled pensiveness and sorrow.

A round-faced, brisk and busy-looking little man happening just then to pop his person out through the companion, stood looking awhile at the shore with eager twinkling eyes, and then directing his gaze aft, caught sight of our lonely individual and approached him.

“ Ah, Mr. Hampden ! there you are ! still puzzling, puzzling, eh ? ” he exclaimed in a hearty manner. “ Come now, you have seen Folkestone, Margate, the Reculvers, eh, now ? Confess that those places have helped you to remember all you want to know.”

The person addressed as Mr. Hampden, but whom we will continue to call by his proper name of Holdsworth, turned his eyes from the shore and answered with an effort, as though he could not at once break away from his thoughts.

"I know all those places well; and there's not a house yonder, I may say, that doesn't assure me I am on familiar ground. But they tell me nothing. My past is still a puzzle, doctor, of which these scenes are only fragments. There are many more things to come before I can piece it into a whole."

"What is a cure for a decayed memory? what *ought* to revive old impressions?" exclaimed the little doctor, hammering a snuff-box with his knuckles. "You'll never know, Mr. Hampden, how you have weighed upon my mind. I feel, sir, that I have

no business to let you quit this ship uncured. And yet, what more than I have done *can* I do? I have exhausted my imagination in questions."

"Yes, doctor, you have been very kind, and I thank you heartily for the interest you have taken in me."

"Ay, but interest is of no professional use," returned the doctor, sniffing up a huge pinch of snuff. "We look to results in our calling. I must say I should like to have been able to tell Mr. Sherman when I get back that I left you remembering everything. Eh, now? But I don't believe there's a medical man living who ever encountered such a case as yours. So much density of mental gloom, sir, seems psychologically impossible. If you could only have given me one end of the thread, so to speak, I might have drawn the whole

skein out smooth. Look about you now. Here is genuine Thames scenery, which, if you are an Englishman, ought to go home straight to your heart and recall a thousand matters."

Holdsworth stared around him, puzzling and biting his lip.

"I have often felt, and I feel now," he exclaimed, "that if I could see something which was prominently identified with my past my memory would return. When we were off Margate, I grew breathless—breathless, doctor, believe me, under the shock of an indefinable sensation. I made sure that my memory was about to rush upon me—oh! it is impossible to explain what is inexplicable to myself. But there have been moments, since we first entered the river, when I have felt that a revelation was close at hand—and I have

trembled whilst awaiting the flooding in of memory, which will not come—which *will* not come !”

“It *will* come. The power that you possess to remember the names and qualities of things which you see, has long ago persuaded me that your memory is not dead, but torpid. Keep your body up, when you get ashore, with nourishing food. Walk the streets constantly and use your eyes, and, when a recollection rises to the surface, don't rush upon it voraciously, but leave it to its own will. Consider, memories are nothing but shadows ; you can't dodge and drive them into corners . . . ”

Here somebody called to him, on which the little man shook Holdsworth's hand, and darted towards the group of passengers.



The ship was rapidly nearing Gravesend, where she would disembark her passengers. The Thames looked noble, with many vessels of all shapes and sizes churning its shining waters, with the houses and wharves ashore, with here and there a short wooden pier running into the stream, and the green summer country smiling beyond.

It was a bright July morning, and the air had an exquisite transparency that so clarified and sharpened the outlines of objects, that it was like looking at them through highly-polished glass. Just such a day should greet all homeward-sailing ships, and make their inmates merry with a foretaste of the shore-life they are to enjoy after their long strife with the distant treacherous ocean.

Anon Gravesend opened, and then the

pilot volleyed some quick orders along the ship. Down rattled staysails, and jibs, and yards with their spacious breadths of canvas; and the stately vessel, denuded of her towering costume, swam lazily into position off the town. Then rose a cry, "Stand clear of the chain-cable!" and the second mate, on the port side of the topgallant forecastle, brandished his arms as a warning to the people on the main-deck to crowd out of the road.

"Let go the anchor!"

Clank! clank! went the carpenter's hammer. And then, with a deafening roar, down plunged the mighty weight of iron, and tore the huge cable with shrieks through the hawser-pipe. The ship swung slowly around and became stationary, with many hands aloft furling the sails, and the quarter-deck throbbing with the

movements and struggles of excited passengers.

And now a dozen boats, some large, some small, came tearing through the water to the ship. How the watermen pulled! Their faces all veins, and their arms all knots, and their hats anywhere! The canoes of cannibals, sneaking from the secret creeks and hidden points of an unexplored island, advance not more swiftly, nor, maybe, with feller or more rapacious designs, upon the intruder in their waters, than did our Gravesend wherries upon this ship fresh from Australia.

Many of the watermen were soon upon the quarter-deck, demanding monstrous sums to row three-quarters of a mile. You saw boxes and bundles seized and disappear, and excited 'tween-deck passengers elbowing a lane to the gangway,

fired with a resolution to disembark or perish, while children screamed, and women implored, and men gesticulated, and even menaced one another. One by one the wherries put off, loaded to the gunwale with people and baggage. These wherries returned and returned again, until the ship was cleared of the majority of her passengers.

“Good-bye, captain,” said Holdsworth.

A sun-burnt man in a blue cloth coat with gilt-buttons took Holdsworth’s hand, and grasped it cordially.

“Good-bye, Mr. Hampden, good-bye to you, sir. Any time these three months, if you have a mind to let me see your face, you will be able to find me out by calling at the Jerusalem Coffee House. I shall be glad, sir, as we all of us shall be, to hear that London has stirred

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up your recollection and restored your memory."

Then the chief mate and second officers and some midshipmen pressed forward and shook his hand, and Holdsworth, pointing out his luggage to a waterman, descended the gangway ladder, and was rowed to Gravesend.

And now, whilst our hero, having been put ashore and eaten a hurried dinner, climbs on top of the coach that is to land him at Southwark, let us beguile an uninteresting interval by casting a brief glance backwards.

On the arrival of the "Jessie Maxwell" at Sydney, Holdsworth had accompanied Mr. Sherman to his house, and been then and there established as an inmate as long as he chose to remain. He was also given

a clerkship in Mr. Sherman's office, worth £250 a year, which was by no means an out-of-the-way price for a man's labour in Australia in those days, though in Holdsworth's case the salary was rendered nearly worth as much again by his friend providing him with board and lodging free. The truth was, (1) Mr. Sherman wanted an honest man in his office; (2) Holdsworth's sufferings, friendlessness, and perfect amiability, coupled with his deprivation of memory, which affected all whom he conversed with as something worse even than blindness, had obtained a permanent hold for him on his generous patron's sympathy long before the "Jessie Maxwell" had sighted the Australian shore.

Mr. Sherman was a widower and childless. A maiden sister of his lived with him, a woman whose character and face were as

like his as an egg is to an egg. Not knowing Holdsworth's name, they agreed to call him Mr. Hampden, which would serve as well as any other, and which had at least the merit of beginning with the letter of his real name.

As Mr. Hampden he was introduced to Mr. Sherman's friends, who took a very great interest in him. Indeed, some of these people went to the extent of giving dinner-parties in his honour, and for a time he was a lion. All this attention, meant in perfect kindness, greatly disturbed him, for his loss of memory made him singularly sensitive, and his nervous system had entirely given way under the extraordinary sufferings he had endured. Mr. Sherman would have kept his secret, but Captain Duff and the officers and men of the "Jessie Maxwell" went and talked of him

all over the city, and then the tale of his discovery and rescue was published in a newspaper and made the property of the public.

But the public soon forgot him. The colony was young, and the New Hollander had too many mines to sink, and houses to build, and acres to clear, and convicts to protest against, and home oppressions of every species to deal with,\* to keep his mind long fixed on one object. Holdsworth settled into a regular clerkly routine, and every day improved himself in Mr. Sherman's opinion, by the peculiar sweetness of his amiability, and by his gratitude

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\* "Great, indeed, must be the natural resources and splendid the endowments of that land, that has been able to survive the system of neglect and oppression experienced from the mother-country, and the series of ignorant and absurd governors that have been selected for the administration of its affairs."—Sydney Smith, *Ed. Review*, 1819.



expressed in every delicate form that could vehicle the emotion of his full heart.

There was an able doctor at that time practising in Sydney, and Mr. Sherman invited him to his house, and introduced him to Holdsworth, believing that, by skilful handling, it was possible to restore the poor fellow's memory. But the doctor after a few weeks shook his head, and pronounced the case hopeless, or at least beyond the reach of human skill.

Indeed, rarely had a more curious and baffling problem been submitted, than Holdsworth's mind in those days.

Here was a man capable of recollecting with precision every incident that had befallen him since his rescue, exhibiting shrewdness in conversation, and accuracy in matters of current fact. His intellect was as healthy as that of the healthiest-

headed man who conversed with him, but up to the period of his rescue everything was in darkness. The conjectures which were offered him—so close to the mark, some of them, that they brushed the very skirts of real facts, and told the truth by implication — conveyed no ideas. His eternal rejoinder was no more than a shake of the head. Had he been a sailor? Did he remember the port from which he sailed? the rig or name of the vessel? his native town? Such questions, and hundreds of them, were asked, but though he grasped familiar names with almost passionate eagerness, they established no faintest clue as to his real past. And then inquiries becoming at last no better than fruitless importunities, were dropped, and Holdsworth was considered incurable.

Yet this could hardly have been thought,

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had those who gave in this opinion been conscious of the undercurrent of secret, but not the less powerful, yearnings, absolutely objectless, scarce owning definite forms, which yet the restless instincts of the man urged with greedy emphasis. These movements were, indeed, purely spiritual—the action of the soul groping in her cell and searching for that window of the mind which had been blackened, and through which no light could break. Of the mental torments this intellectual blindness occasioned, no words that I possess can describe the anguish. Month after month went by and still found him searching heart-brokenly in the gloom for some image, some substance, some sign, that should appease the piteous cravings of his instincts, *which knew all, but could not speak.*

Whatever feminine tact could suggest to give light to his mind, Mr. Sherman's sister did. She made out a long list of names beginning with H, trusting that one among them might be his, and that the sight of it would recall many things or all.

But, long and patiently compiled as the list was, many names there must be which she would omit ; and amongst them his own. Then she made out a list of the names of the ships ; but here was an endless job, prosecuted for a long while with benevolent industry, and then abandoned in despair. She read the European papers carefully, hoping to find some account of the loss of the vessel in which, it was surmised, Holdsworth had been a passenger ; but no such account ever rewarded her search. Numerous were the other remedies she

resorted to, but none of them were fruitful of result.

A few months of such unavailing work would soon extinguish hope. Both she and her brother desisted at last from their merciful endeavours in the full and final conviction that nothing but the hand of God could ever draw aside the black curtain that hung over Holdsworth's past.

But not to dwell at needless length upon this part of the story :

More than four years had passed since Holdsworth had arrived in Sydney. Mr. Sherman had long learned to think of him as settled in the colony, had increased his salary, and congratulated himself not only on the possession of a valuable and trustworthy assistant, but upon a pleasant, amiable, and thoroughly gentlemanly companion. No expression of a wish to leave

had ever escaped Holdsworth's lips. He appeared not only contented, but resigned to the affliction that had practically deprived him of all knowledge of his past existence.

He came down to breakfast one morning with a face betokening great agitation. Mr. Sherman was in the breakfast-room, and instantly noticed Holdsworth's air of bewilderment and distress.

"Mr. Sherman," exclaimed Holdsworth at once to him, "do you remember telling me that it was possible for my memory to be revived by a dream?"

"Yes—has it happened?"

"I cannot tell; but this much I know, that a voice sounded last night in my ears, and bade me return at once to England. It was a woman's voice—it had a clearly-remembered tone—and I knew

it in my sleep; but when I awoke and tried to recall it I could not."

"But your dream?"

"That was all."

"Was your dream merely confined to the utterance of this voice?"

"I can remember nothing more than the voice."

"And you cannot recall whose voice it resembled?"

"No."

Mr. Sherman was silent, and Holdsworth watched him with anxiety, that was almost pathetic, so eager was his hope that his friend would find some light in this dim and curious night-fancy to help him with.

"I can see nothing serviceable in this," said Mr. Sherman presently, "but it is hopeful. Wait a while. This voice may return, or you may dream something more

tangible. Remember," he added with a smile, "that the morning light does not flood the world suddenly. The pale, faint gray comes first, and there are many gradations of brightness between the first peep of dawn and the rising of the sun."

But though Holdsworth waited, the voice did not return. Nevertheless it had sounded in his ears to some purpose. Day by day a longing grew in him to return to England, which became in time deep and fervent and irresistible. Superstition was the root of this yearning; but the poor fellow, urged by his instincts, into an eternal searching amid the darkness, would scarcely pause to consider the nature of his keen desire, but submit to it as an ordinance from God commissioned to impel him into the Divine light of memory.

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Mr. Sherman watched his increasing restlessness in silence, waiting for him to declare his intention. He announced it one day.

“ Mr. Sherman, I feel guilty of deep ingratitude in harbouring a wish to leave you. But my longing to return to England has become so strong that I can no longer resist it. God knows if I am not taking a foolish step in voluntarily quitting so good and beloved a friend. But what are these instincts which govern me ? Ought I to blind myself to them ? Are they not given me for some end which can only be accomplished by my obeying them ? I do not know what I am leaving you to seek ; but I *feel* that whatever my past may hold which is precious to me is to be found in England.”

“ If you have this confidence in your

impulse," answered Mr. Sherman, "you are right in obeying it. I am at least sure that your memory stands but a poor chance of recovery in a strange land, surrounded by objects which have no possible reference to your past, and can, therefore, have no value as an appeal. I shall be sorry, very sorry, to lose you, Mr. Hampden, but I think I can trace the hand of Providence in this longing of yours, and in all humbleness and sincerity I ask God to bless your endeavours and restore you the illumination of your memory."

This resolution, now taken, was final. Mr. Sherman's encouragement gave new strength to Holdsworth's wishes, and the restlessness that beset him became almost unbearable to him. In ten days from that date a ship named the "Wellington" sailed for London; she was to carry many

passengers, but one saloon berth was still vacant, and that Mr. Sherman himself procured and paid for, for Holdsworth. Nor did his kindness stop with this. A few days before the ship left Sydney he asked Holdsworth if he had saved any money.

“Yes, four hundred pounds.”

“Come! that will help you along for a time. Dr. Marlow, a friend of mine, is attending an old lady to England. I have explained your case to him, and begged him to give you his closest attention. He is clever, and the long term of intimacy you will enjoy before you reach London may be productive of some good to you. And now do me the favour to put this in your pocket,” he continued, handing Holdsworth a little parcel. “No need to examine its contents now. It is a small

gift from my sister and myself. You will find my address inside it, which will remind you to write to us ; for be sure that nobody can take more interest in you than we do. Above all, remember that if ever you should want a friend, you will find two very steadfast ones in Sydney, who will rejoice to welcome you back."

The parcel contained bank-notes to the value of three hundred pounds.

## CHAPTER X.

### AN INSPIRATION.

IN the fine old times—the good old times—a short journey took a long time; and it was evening when the Gravesend coach put Holdsworth down at the door of an old inn in Southwark named the “Green Dragon.”

He was now in London, but in an unfamiliar part of it, and he stood for some minutes gazing up and down the wide long street, with its hurrying crowds, and thronging vehicles, and endless shops, without getting one idea more from it than

ever he had got out of Pitt Street or George Street, or any other street in Sydney.

It mattered little to him where he should sleep that night. He had as yet formed no plans as to how he should act with respect to beginning the inquiries which were to give him back his life's history. So he entered the bar of the "Green Dragon" and asked for a bed-room, with which he was at once accommodated.

On descending the stairs he was encountered by a very polite waiter, who begged to receive his orders for refreshments. The house was a very old-established one, and the waiter, with a smile of concern, as though the necessity were a melancholy one that obliged him to suggest such obvious truths at that time of day, ventured to observe that the gentleman might

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travel the whole breadth and length of the United Kingdom without meeting with better wines and choicer cooking than were to be found at that inn. On the strength of this and a small appetite Holdsworth ordered supper, and was conducted to the coffee-room, where he seated himself, the only occupant of the dark bare apartment, at a table furnished with a mustard-pot large enough to have supplied a hospital with poultices, and amused himself as best he could with staring at some grisly, faded prints after Hogarth and a map of London, to which several generations of flies had contributed squares, streets, and blind alleys nowhere to be found in the metropolis proper.

Having eaten his supper, he was leaning back in his chair, with a half resolution in his mind to stroll forth into the streets

for an hour, and see what suggestions his wanderings might obtain for him, when the waiter came up, and leaning confidentially upon the table, informed him that there was an "'Armonious Meeting going on in the public room at the bottom of the passage, and if the gentleman liked, the sperits he was pleased to horder could be served him there."

"Who are they?" asked Holdsworth.

"All sorts, sir. The 'armony is done by some gents as lives in the neighbourhood, who look in every Wednesday night to drink and converse. The governor takes the chair, and every gent as is stoppin' in the house is made welcome. I think you'll be pleased, sir."

"This is dull enough, at all events," said Holdsworth, looking around him. It was too early to go to bed, and he felt



too tired to take his half-projected stroll. So, conceiving that a quarter of an hour's inspection of the convivialists in the public room might cheer him up, he rose and followed the waiter down the passage.

The scene into which he was admitted certainly wanted no feature of liveliness. The room was long and low pitched, with two immense grates in it, and wooden mantelpieces carved into all kinds of quaint embodiments of Greek and Roman mythology. Common brass sconces were affixed to the walls with a couple of candles in each. Around were pictures of fighting and theatrical celebrities of that and an earlier day; Humphreys and Mendoza, stripped to the waist, and working into each other's eyes in wonderful style, watched by a distant and pensive crowd in hats of the Tom and Jerry school, un-

comfortably tight breeches, and coat collars above their ears ; Kemble, in furs ; Incledon dressed as a sailor ; Braham, as little Isaac, in the "Duenna ;" and Dicky Suett, with a thing like a balloon coming out of his mouth, and "O la !" written upon it. At the head of a long table sat a stout man in a striped yellow waistcoat, a bottle-green coat, and a white neckcloth ; several black bottles, steaming jugs, and a plate of lemons were in front of him. And down the table on either side were seated a number of individuals, some of them dressed in extravagant style, a few clad soberly, and most of them smoking cigars, or rapping snuff-boxes, laughing, talking, and drinking from fat one-legged tumblers.

As Holdsworth entered, either a speech, a song, or a sentiment had just been

delivered, for there was a great hammering going on, mingled with cries of "Bravo!" The "cheer," who was the promoter of, and the sole gainer by these Wednesday festivities, bowed to Holdsworth, and getting on to his legs, came round and bade him welcome in the name of all the good fellows there and then assembled, and gave him the sign, which Holdsworth, not having been made, did not take. He then led him to a vacant chair between two of the more soberly clad of the company, and having received and transmitted his commands to the waiter with a most host-like and hospitable air, as though such a low arrangement as a reckoning had no existence, resumed his place at the head of the table, knocked loudly with his knuckles, and called upon Mr. Harris for a song.

On this, up started a thin young man with a yellow beard, and, leaning on his hands, gazed slowly around him with a leering and perfectly self-possessed blood-shot eye. Whereat there was a laugh.

“Gentlemen!” he began.

“Order! silence!” cried the landlord.

“Mr. 'Arris has your ear!”

“And I wish I could say ladies: I am asked to sing a song, and I'll do so with the greatest of pleasure. But before I begin, permit me to make an observation; as I don't want to wound any gentleman's feelings, though no fear of that kind will prevent me from expressing my sentiments, which are those of a Briton and a reformer, who has no opinion of the present, looks upon the past with contempt, and only lives for the future.”

“Hear!” from several reformers.

“There’s a good deal to be said against this age ; and there’s no abuse which the past don’t deserve ! The past ! gentlemen, it did for our grandmothers. The present ! it does for our fathers. But we, gentlemen—we who possess young and ardent minds——”

► “Give us your song !” cried a voice.

“We, gentlemen—we, the young blood of this great nation—we,” cried the orator, swinging his fist, and nearly knocking a cigar out of the mouth of a man at his side, with a face on him filled with idiotic admiration, “are for the future !”

An old man uttered a cheer ; the speaker then coughed, swallowed a draught of brandy-and-water, expanded his chest, ran his fingers through his hair, and began as follows, throwing out his arms in approved comic style :—

## THE DAYS WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

Of the days when I was young, sir,  
Sing the splendour and the fame,  
When the fields and woods among, sir,  
Traps were set to guard our game;  
When our clergymen got drunk, sir,  
And our Prince was made of waistcoats,  
When our soldiery had spunk, sir,  
And wore epaulets and faced coats.

CHORUS—Sing the days when I was young!  
Such a song was never sung!

When Madeira, port, and sherry  
Were such wines as made men wits:  
When our songs were coarse and merry,  
And our pockets full of writs!  
When we fought like hungry Spartans,  
And told tales like Jemmy Twitcher's;  
When cognac was drank in quarters,  
And October ale in pitchers!

Sing the days, &c.

When the House was full of quarrels,  
And our hustings the arenas  
For dead cats and bilious morals  
And the music of hyenas!  
When our Avershaws were strangling,  
And our Mrs. Frys were preaching:  
And our priests and bishops wrangling,  
And our patriots a-screeching!

Sing the days, &c.

When a Tory *was* a Tory,  
Armour'd tight in old tradition,  
Quoting nothing but the hoary,  
And a friend to superstition :  
Hating Irishmen and priests, sir,  
All excisemen and dissenters,  
Holy fasts and holy feasts, sir,  
Whigs and Jews and ten-pound renters !  
Sing the days, &c.

When our fiddlers were true artists,  
And our singers all had voices :  
Ere our labourers were Chartists,  
And the land was full of noises.  
When our "bloods" were breaking knockers,  
Smashing bells all free and hearty,  
And when little else could shock us  
But reports of Bonaparte.  
Sing the days, &c.

When our coaches turn'd us over,  
And our watchmen snor'd in alleys :  
When it took a day to Dover,  
And a week or two to Calais.  
When Jack Ketch was hanging women  
Who stole bread for starving babies,  
And our rogues were just as common  
As new honey in old May bees.  
Sing the days, &c.

Never more shall we survey, sir,  
Times so splendid and so stirring,  
Social life and tastes more gay, sir,  
Laws and statesmen more unerring.  
Fights and factions more unsparing,  
Tories truer to traditions,  
Foreign policy more daring——

(Here the vocalist took a deep breath),

And more brutal superstitions !

The sounds excited by this song were somewhat discordant, owing to the bravos being mingled with hisses. Mr. Harris resumed his seat with a contemptuous expression, and the chairman, rapping the table, called out :

“Gentlemen ! ’issing isn’t ’armony to any ear but a goose’s !”

“I don’t like the sentiments of that song,” exclaimed a man at the bottom of the table.

“Why not, sir ?” demanded Mr. Harris, warmly.



"First of all, I don't understand 'em," said the other.

"Oh!" said Mr. Harris with a sneer.

"Much of what that song says is to be applied to the present as well as to the past," observed an old gentleman, looking staggered at his own boldness in talking amid a silence. "For my part, I don't think a man fights fair who uses a two-edged sword."

Several voices murmured acquiescence.

"I'm for the future," said Mr. Harris, "and told you so at the beginning."

"See here, gentlemen," called out the landlord; "the meaning of Mr. Harris' song, so far as I understand its hallucinations, is this: he supposes himself to be old——"

"No, I don't," growled Mr. Harris.

"Quite the contrary, *I* think," snarled a little grocer near the chairman. "I reckon

there's more swaddling-clothes nor experience in *them* sentiments, or I'm gone deaf since I sat down."

"The meaning of my song is just what it says," retorted Mr. Harris. "I'm not ashamed of being a reformer. Better men than I or any other gentleman in this room, begging *nobody's* pardon, have been reformers. Thank God, my politics are not of a kind to call up my blushes when I own them."

As the Tories in the company judged that something offensive was meant by Mr. Harris, several persons spoke at once, and a clamour ensued which threatened to establish the meeting on any other basis than that of harmony. Indeed, one man, who was nearly intoxicated, went so far as to get upon his chair and exclaim, while he brandished his fist, that if he had it in his

power, he would hang every Whig in the country. And there is no telling what further extravagances of language and gesture he might have indulged in, but for the prompt interference of a neighbour, who, catching hold of his coat-tail, pulled him under the table.

However, by dint of shouting pacific language at the top of his voice, the chairman succeeded at last in restoring tranquillity. More grog was brought in, snuff-boxes were handed about, hands were shaken across the table, and loud cheers greeted the sentiment delivered by a gentleman who appeared to be vice-chairman: "That 'armony of feeling was the music of humanity." Mr. Harris apologised for having sung anything distasteful to the company, whom he hoped were all his very good friends; and amid the clanking of

spoons in glasses and polite calls of "After you" for lighted spills, the conversation streamed into milder channels, and everybody did his best to look harmonious.

Though Holdsworth was a good deal amused by this scene, and by the manners and dress of the people around him, he hardly felt himself equal to enduring very much more of this social harmony, and sat twisting his glass on the table, watching the faces of the company, and waiting for another "row" to make his escape without attracting notice.

He was presently addressed by a man sitting on his left—a middle-aged individual, with a thin, smooth-shaven face and a keen eye, and very high shirt-collars.

"A stranger, I make bold to think, sir?"

"Yes," answered Holdsworth.

"I judge so by an air of travel about

you, if you'll pardon me. Forgive me, sir, if I inquire your secret—understand me—your secret opinion as to that song just sung by the gentleman opposite.”

“To tell you the truth,” replied Holdsworth, who imagined that his companion wanted to draw him into a political argument, “I only caught a few of the verses, and am therefore scarcely able to give an opinion.”

“Humph!” exclaimed the other. “Now, sir, *I* call that song clever—damned clever, and I'll tell you why : it's ironical. Without irony, sir, I wouldn't give a pin's head for the best piece of humour in the world. You'll excuse what I'm about to say, sir, I am sure. You are a traveller—I flatter myself I can tell that with half an eye. Now, sir, as a man who has visited other countries, and observed human nature

in a hundred different forms, you can't help being a Whig. Confess, sir, that you share my political views, which are those of a man who has only one cry—'Down with rubbish!'"

"I hate rubbish as much as any man," replied Holdsworth.

His companion looked struck and delighted.

"Your hand, sir. Permit me to shake it. I love a Whig, sir. Here's to your good health."

"Are you a native of this country, sir?" he continued, glancing at Holdsworth's dress, which had a decidedly colonial cut.

"I believe so."

"But not a resident?" said the other, whose turn of mind was decidedly inquisitive.

“No.”

“Now what part might you have come from, sir, if you’ll excuse the liberty?” asked the man confidentially.

“From Australia.”

“God bless my heart and soul! You don’t say so! Dear me! Australia! Is it possible? I consider myself a bit of a traveller; but in your presence, sir, I feel my insignificance.”

Holdsworth laughed, but made no answer.

“They say that Australia is a wonderful country, sir: that you grow cherries with the stones outside, and that your parrots are like sea-gulls. Fine climate though, I believe, sir, if you will pardon me?”

“Very fine.”

“And yet not equal to ours?”

“Perhaps not.”

“They talk of scenery, sir. Now I was

never out of England in my life, though there's not a hole or corner in it that I don't know. But what can equal English scenery? Take Devonshire. Take Cumberland. Were you ever in those counties?"

"Never."

"Yorkshire?"

"No."

"Talk of desolation—see the moors: great plains of the colour of tripe stretching for miles, with one dwarf tree for every league of ground, and that's all. Now, sir, my taste may be wrong, or perhaps it's right; I wouldn't flaunt it in any man's face, though I'd hold on to it if I was on my death-bed. Of all the counties in England, which think you I'm the most partial to?"

"I cannot imagine."



"Kent, sir!" exclaimed the man, drawing back triumphantly.

The name sent a thrill through Holdsworth. He pricked his ears and looked at his companion earnestly.

"The Devonshire people may crack up their county, but give *me* Kent. I am a native of Kent, sir!"

"Indeed!"

"I was born at Canterbury. Ever seen the cathedral?"

"Canterbury Cathedral! I know the name well," muttered Holdsworth, struggling to grasp an illusive, half-formed fancy that flitted across his mind.

"Take the country about Hanwitch, now . . ."

"Hanwitch!" echoed Holdsworth. The name pierced him as a sword might. He pressed his fingers tightly over his eyes,

memory in him into a vitality that threatened to make it burst through the shell that imprisoned it, and proclaim all that he passionately longed to know.

Powerless must his mind have been not to find in the name of the Hanwitch inn the magic to give him back his memory. Could not his heart recall the sweet day he had spent in Hanwitch with Dolly at his side?—the sweetest, happiest day of all the days he had passed in the brief three months during which they had been together? One might have thought that, saving her own dear face, there was nothing more potent to roll back the deep mantle of darkness, and lay bare the shining panorama of those far-off times, than the name of the inn in whose deep bay window they had sat linked in each other's arms, watching the soft sunshine shimmering

through the summer leaves, and the clear river wandering gently along its emerald-banked channel.

Further conversation was out of the question for a while, by the chairman hammering on the table and calling silence for a song. The disagreeable effects produced by the last song had completely passed away, and the landlord thought that another "ditty," as he called it, might safely be sung.

A very corpulent man stood up, with a face upon him of which the quantity of flesh had worked the expression into an aspect of fixed amazement. An immense blue-spotted cravat adorned his throat, and long streaks of hair fell slanting down his cheeks. His small clothes and arm-sleeves were distressingly tight, and suggested that any display of pathos

or humour, of gesticulation or laughter, would be in the highest degree inconvenient. It was not hard to guess that this fat man sang comic songs, that he dropped *every* h, and that he was in the eating-line, in a commercial sense.

He was saluted with a round of laughter, which, being hammered down, he began in a soft, oily, tenor voice :

“ A dawg’s-meat man he loved a voman,  
Sairey her name vos—not uncommon ;  
He had vun eye, and he hown’d a barrer.  
Coopid up’s vith his bow and lets fly a arrer.  
‘ O dear ! ’ cries this dawg’s-meat man,  
Fingerin’ his buzzum and looking vith his eye ;  
‘ Vot can this be a-sticking in my tan ? ’  
Ven Sairey draws near a-lookin’ very shy.  
‘ Tell me,’ sez he, ‘ the name o’ this here thing ? ’  
‘ Vy,’ sez Sairey vinkin’, ‘ it’s vun o’ Coopid’s darts.’ ”  
                                    &c.                      &c.

This song gave such exquisite satisfaction to the company that, on his concluding it,

he was entreated, amid cheers, to sing another ; on which, squaring his breast, but preserving his wooden face of fat astonishment, he began as follows :

“ There vos a 'ot pieman as vurked in the Strand,  
Singing hey, ho ! 'ot pies, all 'ot !  
Vun night he was kickin' his 'eels at his stand,  
Ven who should come up but a lady all grand,  
With a dress all of satin, and rings on her 'and,  
And she asts for a pie  
Did this lady, oh my !  
Let us cry.  
Singing hey, ho ! 'ot pies, all 'ot !

“ Now, our friend was genteel, as all piemen should be,  
Singing hey, ho ! 'ot pies, all 'ot !  
And he sez to this lady, so grand for to see,  
' My pies, mum, are meant for sitch people as me,  
For poor cabbies and sitch ; not for folks of degree,'  
And she jest sez, ' O fie !  
Hand me quickly a pie,  
Or I'll cry.'  
Singing hey, ho ! 'ot pies, all 'ot ! ”

I spare the reader the remaining six verses

of this delectable song. The company joined in the chorus with the full force of their lungs, and so exhilarated the fat vocalist, that at the end of the second verse he pushed away his chair, and folding his arms on his breast, actually danced an accompaniment to the words, amid shrieks of laughter and wild stretching forward of necks at the farther end of the table to see him. Holdsworth's companion laughed until he grew faint, and then, to recover his strength, drank brandy-and-water, and then laughed again. The song was encored, genuine vulgarity seldom failing to please ; and then a brief breathing-space of silence falling, Holdsworth said to his companion :

“ Will you tell me how I am to get to Hanwitch from here ? ”

“ Certainly. All you've got to do is,

step across to the 'Canterbury Arms'—it's five minutes' walk from this house on the left—the coach starts for Canterbury at half-past seven in the morning, every day."

"Thank you," said Holdsworth, who found it impossible, amid the renewed hubbub of conversation that had burst out, to ask some questions about Hanwich, which might help him to understand the longing that possessed him to visit it.

"You're not going—the night's very young, sir?" said the man, seeing Holdsworth rise. But Holdsworth merely wished him "Good night," and slipped out of the room unnoticed by the company, who were at that moment busy in entreating the fat man to give them another song.

The cool air and silence of the passage were a great relief after the heat and

noise of the public room. It was now drawing near to eleven o'clock. Holdsworth went to the bar and asked for a candle, and was lighted to his bed-room by a chamber-maid with ringlets and black eyes, who probably felt surprised that her charms attracted no notice whatever from the gentleman, who seemed to find pleasure in no other object than the carpet on which he trod.

Holdsworth closed the door, and a whole hour passed before he rose to remove his clothes. There was something in the recollection of the thrill which the name of Hanwitch had sent through him, that impelled him to bend the whole energies of his mind to the word, and he strove with memory passionately and fiercely, but could not wrench a syllable from her. He repeated the name until it lost even its sense



as the designation of a town. Nevertheless, every moment made his longing to visit it deeper. There must be *some* reason why this name had so stirred him. The names of other English counties and cities had been pronounced before him and by him over and over again, but they touched no chord, they awoke no echo in his mind, however dim and elusive.

If memory would only define the object he sought! This it would not do. He was a wanderer, obeying the dictation of blind instinct, which urged without guiding him. Of all his past, nothing was present to his mind. He knew not what he sought. His was an affliction crueller than blindness, for a blind man could say: "A beloved one has strayed from me. I seek her. I see not, indeed, those who surround me, but my mission has form and substance in my mind,

and my inquiries cannot *always* prove fruitless." But Holdsworth was commanded by a mysterious emotion which controlled without enlightening him. *Something* had been lost—*something* was to be found. He felt his want, but could not explain it to himself. No man could help him, since no man could guess what was the thing he looked for.

When he left his chair he sank upon his knees and asked God in broken tones to help him—to direct him into the path that should lead him to the light—to aid him in his yearning to re-illuminate his memory.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FOR HANWITCH.

IF a man has one good reason for being grateful for living in these times, it is because they are *not* coaching days.

The old stage-coach, the Wellerian coachman, the spruce guard with his horn and his jokes, the fat people inside, the gruff people outside, all contributed a picturesque detail to the age they belonged to ; but I have generally found that the more picturesque an object is, the fitter it is to be surveyed at a distance only.

If in the days to which the old stage-

coach belonged it never rained, it was never cold, one was never in a hurry, there were no missions of life and death to make one curse the delay of a moment—if one's companions were always good-tempered, and one's body was so constituted as to endure jerks and jolts and a sitting posture for hours at a stretch without inconvenience—then the old stage-coach may be conceived to have been a very agreeable means of locomotion. But as I have been informed by several elderly gentlemen that the weather forty years ago was pretty much the same sort of weather as it now is, that strokes of death and strokes of business requiring immense dispatch happened then as they happen every day; in a word, that in most atmospherical, moral, and civic respects the early years of this century differed but very little from these its maturer days, I can only repeat,

in spite of the protests of several venerable friends who seem to find most things (even whilst enjoying them) objectionable which are not as aged as themselves, that if we have one excuse better than another for being on good terms with the times we live in, it is because the picturesque old stage-coach makes no condition of our daily existence.

Hanwitch was about fifty miles from London. To-day a traveller would be carried the distance in about an hour and three-quarters. Holdsworth, starting at half-past seven in the morning, would, providing that the coach did not break down or overturn, reach the town at about four o'clock in the afternoon.

He awoke at half-past six, and at once rose. The morning was a bright one, but all the efforts of the sunshine to squeeze

itself through the wire blinds and dusty panes of the coffee-room windows could not avail to communicate the faintest spark of cheerfulness to the dingy apartment, with its bare tables and blue-coloured looking-glass over the chimney, and the old-fashioned prints around the walls, suggestive, one knew not why, of London milk and discoloured blankets. .

The waiter came in, looking dejected, limp, and fluey, and perhaps to pay Holdsworth out for neglecting to leave word at the bar before going to bed, that he should want to breakfast at an unreasonable hour, declaimed a bill of fare, nearly every item of which, as Holdsworth named it, he declared could not possibly be got ready before half-past eight. Cold ham and tea must suffice, with which order the waiter sleepily withdrew, and after a long absence

returned—when Holdsworth was on the point of starting up and leaving the house in the full belief that he should miss the coach—bearing a teapot of which the contents looked like rain-water, a loaf of bread as hard and slippery as glass under the knife, a lump of butter of the colour and perfume of soaked cheese, and a ham of which what was not bone was brine.

Very lightly breaking his fast with these things, Holdsworth called for his bill, and obtaining the services of the Boots to carry his portmanteau, which was all the baggage he had brought with him from Australia, walked to the house from which the Canterbury coach started.

It wanted but ten minutes of the starting-time, but no coach was visible. However, it was up the yard, and would be brought round in a few minutes, the book-keeper

said. As these few minutes threatened to expand into half an hour, Holdsworth entered the bar of the "Canterbury Arms" to obtain a biscuit and some brandy-and-water, partly to complete the wretched breakfast he had made, and partly to exterminate the vile flavour of the tea that lingered in his mouth.

When he returned, the coach was out, the horses were in, several passengers were getting into, or climbing on top of, the vehicle; the coachman, muffled about the throat as though the month were November, and the air full of snow, stood on the pavement, smoking a cigar and surveying the whole picture with a lordly and commanding, though a somewhat inflamed eye; and the busy scene was completed by a body of boys and men offering newspapers, walking-sticks, knives, combs, and



broad sheets of songs to the passengers, and striving to drown each other's importunities with loud and ceaseless clamour.

Off went the coach at last, with Holdsworth by the coachman's side. The wheels rattled over the hard roads, the houses in long lines swept by, lost by degrees their frowsy exteriors and dingy metropolitan aspects, and attempted little revelations of bucolic life in small gardens, with glimpses of trees in the rear. Then came houses standing alone in grounds of their own, cottages purely pastoral in appearance, with the noise of farmyards about them, and their atmosphere sweetened by the smell of hay and flowers. These dropped away, the breeze grew pure and elastic, the country opened in wide spaces of waving cornfields spotted with bright poppies, and swelling meadow lands and green fields shaded by

groups of trees, with here and there a lark whistling in the blue sky, and all London lying behind, marking its mighty presence by a haze that seemed to stretch for miles and miles, and paled the heavens to the hue of its own complexion.

Holdsworth was such bad company, that the coachman soon ceased his "observations" touching the different scenes through which they passed, and addressed himself to his companion on the right, a young gentleman who was going as far as Chatham, and who lighted several large cigars in less than half an hour, pulling at them with hollows in his cheeks, and looking at the ash of them, and preserving a very pale face. Holdsworth had something else to think about than the coachman's refined and classical remarks, delivered from the depth of three shawls.

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The quick rolling of the coach over the smooth turnpike-road was inducing an exhilaration that acted upon him as good wine acts upon the brain, giving clearness and freedom to thought, and causing life to be felt at her most secret sources. There was the impression in his mind that he had once before travelled on the top of a stage-coach along this very road, though when, or under what circumstances, or whether he had actually performed the journey or had read of some one else having done it, he could not tell. The scenery they were travelling through was altogether delicious, and better than a cordial to a man who had just landed from a three and a half months' voyage at sea. The aspect of the country was full of that sober sweetness of general effect which soothes the heart with a deep

sense of home ; of broad yellow tracts burnished by the sunshine, of the delicate shadowing of green, and the neutral tint of fallow soil ; houses made as dainty by distance as pictures on ivory ; great trees spreading their broad abundant leaves over cool spaces of gleaming water ; with the animation, now and again, of human life, where men worked in the fields, or where children sported before the houses, stopping their frolics to cheer the coach, while women held babies high in their hands and swayed to the delighted plunging of the chubby limbs.

Holdsworth, however, was by no means a sample of the " outsides " carried by the coach, whatever the department of the invisible " insides " might have been. There were some half-a-dozen people on the roof, including two girls, one of whom

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was decidedly pretty and the other decidedly coquettish. These young ladies, at the first going off, had been ceaseless in the expression of their fears that, though it was true they were up all right, they should never be able to get down again. A gentleman with a turn-up nose, expressive of the utmost self-complacency, had taken it upon himself to comfort the ladies, by remarking that getting down was in every case easier than getting up, because the natural tendency of the human body was to fall ; at which the ladies had murmured " Impertinence ! " and " Some people are better seen than heard," and such-like scathing phrases, thereby sanctioning the display of such wit as the turn-up-nosed gentleman possessed, which he exerted with such good effect that the ladies grew crimson under uncontrollable

fits of laughter. Then the guard struck in, and provoked the other outsiders to talk ; and presently a large flat bottle was handed around, which had the effect of making everybody who put it to his or her lips merrier still. Onwards rattled the coach with its noisy, laughing burden, flinging sounds of life broadcast over the green country, provoking many a pair of slow bucolic eyes to stare it gravely out of sight, raising clouds of dust as the wheels went softly over the floury highway, spinning under mile-lengths of trees darkening the road with twinkling shadows, and throbbing with the piercing shrilling of innumerable birds buried in the dense foliage, catching the hot sunshine again in the open, and gleaming like a gigantic looking-glass as it sped gaily forward under the broad eye of Heaven.

It was two o'clock when they changed horses for the second time at a smart little Kentish town, with a gray ruin right in its midst, and an old church hard by it, with one of the snuggest of rectories peeping at the world out of the silence and shadow of a rich orchard. Some of the "insides" got out here and went their ways, and were no more seen. The young ladies on the roof were entreated to alight by the small-nosed man, but this they noisily refused to do, the mere idea of such a thing causing them to catch hold of each other. The delay, however, was a short one. The jaded horses, with streaks of white foam upon their polished hides, were taken out and fresh ones put in; the coachman, smelling strongly of gin and peppermint, climbed into his place, cracked his whip, and off started the coach, followed by a

crowd of excited boys, who chased it clear of the town and then threw stones after it.

"Where might you be for, sir?" inquired the coachman of Holdsworth, speaking out of his stomach like a ventriloquist.

"Hanwitch."

"Several stoppages afore Hanwitch," said the coachman.

"How many?"

"Vy, there's Saltwell, Halton, Gadstone, and Southbourne."

"Southbourne!"

"Yes, Southbourne, of course. That's the willage jist afore Hanwitch."

"Southbourne! Southbourne!" repeated Holdsworth, with the old look of bewilderment that invariably entered his face when some familiar name was sounded in his ear.

The coachman glanced at him over his shawls, and said to himself, quite in the



pit of his stomach. "You're a rum 'un, you are!"

"P'raps you ar'n't acquainted with the road, sir?" said he.

"I think—I am sure I know Southbourne," replied Holdsworth. "What sort of place is it?"

"Vot sort o' place? Vy, a willage."

"But what kind of village?"

"All that I know is this, there's a hinn there vere they serves you vith werry good liquor. Blow'd if I can tell you any thing further. But that's my veakness, sir. Would you believe me, I've drove coaches through that willage for the last two-and-twenty year, and may I be bil'd if I can tell you anything about it."

Holdsworth sank into deep thought, while the coachman, twisting his eyes over his shawls, examined his face and clothes

with side-long attention ; then his curiosity being evidently aroused by something in Holdsworth's appearance, which widely differed from the cut and style of the passengers he was in the habit of carrying, he said :

" Might you be a furriner, sir ?"

" No," answered Holdsworth.

" I've a brother in Californy. P'haps you might know them parts, sir ?"

" I have just returned from Australia."

" Oh !" exclaimed the coachman, looking staggered ; " that's a good vays off, ain't it ?"

" The other side of the world."

" Gor bless me ! A queer place, I've heerd. Full of conwicks. One of our guards was sent out there t'other day for abstracting of money from a wallis."

This reference operating upon his sympathies, he entered into a story, as long

as a newspaper account, of the trial ; " how beautiful the counsell as hadvocated the pore fellow spoke, vich the court vos crowded vith coachmen, who groaned ven-hever the hadvocate as vos opposed to the guard began to speak, vich behaviour, though it warn't p'raps quite correck, vasn't to be stopped nohows, although the judge looks werry fierce, and the counsell kep' on sayin', ' My lud, if this here noise ain't stopped, I'll throw the case up,' vich vos just the thing the coachmen vanted" (here he made as though he would poke Holdsworth in the ribs with the butt-end of his whip); "but, lor' save yer, it was no go."

Holdsworth paid no attention to this story, his mind being engaged in a desperate struggle with memory. Indeed, the word "Southbourne" had affected him as no other

allusion had. Pale, dim phantoms of memory, comparable to nothing so much as the phosphorescent outlines which the eye may mark fluctuating in the black seawater, rose and sank in his mind; and though whispering nothing to his breathless anxiety, clearly proving that the faculty which he had long believed dead was beginning to stir and awaken.

One by one the towns or villages named by the coachman had been passed, and now Southbourne was to come.

An indescribable anxiety, at once breathless and thrilling, suspending, it seemed to him, the very pulsations of his heart, making his breath come and go in quick, fierce respirations, possessed Holdsworth.

He held his hands tightly clasped; all colour had fled from his face, and his deep-sunk eyes glowed with unnatural fire.

Repeatedly he muttered to himself, "What does this portend?"

Already his prophetic soul had caught the light, and seemed to know herself, and maddened him and wrung his frame with her wild and bitter struggles to proclaim her inspiration and pierce her reflected beam through the film that still blinded the eye of the mind.

The sun was still high, and flung its yellow brilliance over the fair and gilded prospect. The coach had turned the corner of the long road that led straight as an arrow into Southbourne; and far away at the extremity, in mingled shadow and shine, the few houses could be seen, with the spire of St. George's Church rearing high its flaming vane, and on the left the gleam of the river shadowed by many trees.

“There’s Southbourne!” said the coachman, pointing with his whip.

The dust whirled in a cloud behind the wheels, the guard sounded his horn, and with a rush and a rattle the coach drew up opposite the “Hare and Hounds,” a tavern as familiar to Holdsworth as the sight of his own hand.

“Hullo!” cried the coachman. “Hi! you there! Help! A glass o’ brandy! Blowed if the gentleman hasn’t fainted!”

“Fainted!” cried the young ladies on the top of the coach, leaning forward to catch a sight of his face.

No, not fainted; but struck down by a revelation such as, had the two young ladies and the small-nosed man and the coachman been told the story of it, would have supplied them with enough matter

to keep them talking without intermission as long as the coach-wheels turned.

Memory, coming out of the little house at the bottom of the long familiar thoroughfare, out of the little house that turned its shoulder upon the highway and parted it into lanes, had rushed upon him like an armed man, and struck him a staggering blow. He had dropped under it, and, but for the support of the apron over his knees, would have fallen to the ground.

The guard ran into the tavern and returned with a glass of brandy, which the coachman put to Holdsworth's lips.

"Thank you, I am better now," he exclaimed.

"Glad to hear it," said the coachman.

"I will get down here."

"Aren't you booked for Hanwitch?"

exclaimed the guard, who imagined that the gentleman's head wandered.

"No—this will do—I will go no farther. Help me with your hand—thank you."

He reached the ground, watched by a group of persons who made a movement as though to support him, when they saw him swaying to and fro like a drunken man, and staring fixedly down the road. But in a moment or two, with a struggle, he stood firm. His portmanteau was handed out and carried into the bar. The guard took his place; the coachman, with a glance over his shawls to see that Holdsworth stood clear of the wheels, jerked the reins, and the coach rattled out of sight.



## CHAPTER XII.

### SOUTHBOURNE.

RIGHT in the middle of the road stood Holdsworth, casting his eyes first to the right, then to the left, then letting them rest fixedly on the house at the extremity.

Here was the scene, the place at last, that was to roll back the curtains which hid the past from him, and to proclaim the resurrection of the life within him that for years had slept a sleep as deep as death.

There he stood, brought by God's hand

from a far-off world into the little Kentish village, where his memories lay heaped, where association made a beacon of every humble house to lead him with unerring step backward and backward to the sweetest, the dearest of all his memories.

How remembered, how deeply remembered the scene! The old tavern on the right, with its swinging signboard, its burnished latticed windows, the great elm tree spreading its branches, like soft fingers, over the red-tiled roof; the farmhouse facing it, with the clamour of hidden poultry all about it, softened by the cooing of doves; and the cherry and apple trees stretching forth their fruit over the wooden railing, and the strings of white linen drying in the open spaces among the trees; the vista of gable-peaked houses, the old shops, the grassy land between the houses,

the blacksmith's shed, the hens in the roadway, the children on the doorsteps, the women working at the open windows, and the little house at the extremity, backed by soft masses of green trees and the delicate blue of the afternoon sky.

He knew his life's history as he surveyed this scene, as though a voice in his ear were whispering it all to him. The chain was too complete not to suggest the unseen links; the throng of associations was too manifold and pregnant not to reveal to his mind the things which his eyes beheld not. Swiftly and fiercely—a very whirlwind of logic — thought flew over each stepping-stone to the hidden past; and then he knew what he had left, what he was now to seek, and what had been the WANT which his instincts—that deeper life of his of which the movements were

independent of the senses—had never lost sight of.\*

When his faintness had passed, a great joy took possession of him—an impulse so keenly exhilarating, that he could have cried aloud in his rapture. But then came a revulsion—a deadly fear—of what he knew not, save that its presence turned him into ice, and damped his forehead with sweat.

He was all unconscious of the eyes that were upon him; but some one approaching made him turn his head, and he saw several persons watching him curiously

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\* - This mixed sensation is an effect of the memory. From an effect we naturally ascend to the cause. . . . When ideas have any relations whatever, they are attractive of each other in the mind; and the perception of any object naturally leads to the idea of another which was connected with it either in time or place, or which can be compared or contrasted with it."—*Samuel Rogers*.

from the door of the inn, while others, plain country people in smocks and high-lows, muttered to one another as they stared from the pavement.

"Won't you please to step in, sir?" said the man who came forward, a short, square-faced individual, in a black calico apron and a white hat.

"Who lives in that house?" returned Holdsworth, pointing down the road.

"That one yonder, with the chimbley looking this way? Why, I don't think anybody's living in it just now, although I did hear that it was taken by a party from Ashford.—Emily!" he called.

A stout, well-looking woman elbowed her way out of the tavern, and stood on the lower step.

"The gentleman wants to know who lives in that house at the bottom?"

"It's to let. Mr. Markham has the letting of it," answered the woman.

"His is the shop yonder," said the man. "You'll see 'Undertaker and Joiner' wrote over the door."

"I'll send a boy to fetch him, if you like," said the woman.

"I'll goa, missus," remarked an old man in a long blouse, turning about on his stick in his eagerness to earn a glass of yale.

"No, I don't want him," said Holdsworth.

"Won't you step in and rest yourself, sir?" exclaimed the woman, exerting the seductive smile with which she was wont to greet every passenger who stopped at her door.

Holdsworth hesitated a moment, as though there were a magic in the little distant house that constrained him to keep his

eyes upon it, and then entered the tavern, heralded by the landlady, and followed by the landlord.

The parlour into which he was conducted was as quiet and private as he could wish, screened by a red curtain across the glass of the door from the bar, with a window opening on to a square of ground well stocked with shrubs and vegetables. The sunshine streamed into the room, and lighted up the queer ornaments on the mantelpiece, the fine old china hanging upon rows of hooks in a mahogany cabinet, the well-worn carpet, the velvet sofa, the black bottles and glittering tankards on the shelves of the sideboard.

The landlord went behind the bar to look after some besmoked gentry who were drinking in front of it, leaving his wife to attend to Holdsworth.

“What might you like to order, sir?” she inquired, presenting herself at a side door.

He asked her to bring him some wine and biscuits, saying that he had no appetite now, but would dine or sup later on. He looked at her very attentively as he spoke, with an idea in his mind that he had seen her before.

She went away, and he left his seat and paced the room with a wild look of distress on his face, and bitter anxiety and fear in his heart. Once he snatched up his hat and advanced to the door, but hesitated and resumed his agitated walk. His feelings were those of a man just awakened to consciousness from the effects of a blow that had stunned him. His body trembled, his lips worked, and he held his hands squeezed tightly together. His sufferings



were indeed terrible. He looked back upon the blank of five years and recoiled before the conjectures his heart prompted as to the things which had happened in that time. Sometimes his impulse was to rush forth and cry aloud for Dolly, and then a deadly chill came over him, and he shut his eyes and beat aside his thoughts, as though they were something tangible and apart from him, with his hand.

When the door opened, he bit his lip to control himself, and kept his back turned upon the woman in feigned inspection of a print upon the wall. As she was about to withdraw, he looked at her and said :

“ Have you lived long in Southbourne ? ”

“ Yes, sir, many years. ”

He seated himself and drank a glass of wine.

“How many years?”

“Oh, twelve, thirteen. Ah, more like fifteen years, sir!”

“So long! Then you know all the people here?”

“Yes, sir, I daresay I do,” answered the woman, putting her hands under her apron, and examining Holdsworth’s face and clothes with great curiosity.

“Who last lived in that house at the bottom of the street?”

“You mean the one you was askin’ my husband about?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Fairchild, the butcher, after he sold his business about two years ago.”

“Who before Mr. Fairchild?”

“It stood empty awhile after Mrs. Holdsworth left it.”

“Where is she now?”

“Livin’ at Hanwitch, along with her husband, Mr. Conway, the dentist.”

The woman’s eyes, when she made this answer, were on the garden ; when she looked again at Holdsworth, his face was turned from her.

“Did you know any of the parties, sir, as you’re asking about ?” she inquired.

He did not answer her, and she, thinking that he had not heard her, continued :

“I was servant along with poor Mr. Newcome before the old gentleman died, and saw a good deal of Mrs. Holdsworth, as I always call her; for, somehow, I can never bear to think of her as Mrs. Conway, for her heart never went with her hand when she married that gentleman, as I can bear witness to, for I was at the wedding, and never saw a poor body cry as she did. She and her grandmother, old Mrs.

Flemming, was often at the rectory . . . but I beg pardon, sir ; you was speaking of the house. I can't remember who had it before Mrs. Holdsworth. It's a long time ago."

Holdsworth raised his head.

Up to the moment of her speaking of Dolly he had not known his own name ; all other memories had returned to him, save that. His face was very white, but there was a strong expression in it. If the woman were to talk for another twelve hours, she could add nothing more to what she had already said. Dolly's death he had expected as he had expected a hundred other nameless possibilities, when memory swooped upon him and set him peering over the edge of the chasm that separated the Then from the Now ; but not her marriage. Not that. In all the hours he had passed

in the open boat at sea, beholding death striking down his companions about him, suffering the exquisite torture of thirst, the yet more exquisite pang of hopelessness, there was no moment of agony in all that time comparable to the agony that now wrenched him. It might be one of those terrible experiences which break the heart or transform the nature, but it gave to or found in Holdsworth a quality of endurance that enabled him to front the extremity with a face of marble.

When next he spoke his voice was low, but without a tremor in it.

"I am interested in Mrs. Conway and her old grandmother. Tell me what you know about them."

"Surely, sir, you don't bring news of Mr. Holdsworth—of the fine young man that went to sea and was shipwrecked?" in-

quired the woman with a face of excitement, and staring hard, as if she were about to receive some astounding news.

“No, no!” he answered, almost under his breath; and then he added, “Tell me what you know of the widow.”

“I remember Mr. Holdsworth well,” said the woman, her speech answering to her mood. “A handsomer young fellow I never saw. He used often to be at the rectory with his wife, and the love between them was something beautiful. How she ever had the heart to let him leave her I never could guess. But he went and was drowned, and left the young thing without a friend or a shilling in the wide world, God help her; and though I said it was almost stupid her marrying Mr. Conway, remembering what love there was between her and Mr. Holdsworth, yet I have always

believed it was for her child's sake that she married the dentist, for they were in desperate want when he courted her, and must have starved for want of help."

"You are speaking of Holdsworth's child?"

"Yes, sir. A bright little thing, and as fair as a lily. I saw her the other day when I was over at Hanwitch. She was with her mamma, and I never see such a likeness as there is between her and her poor drowned papa. But you're askin' about old Mrs. Flemming. Why, she died four years ago. She was very old, and went off quite peaceful, they said. What with Mrs. Flemming's death, and her never getting any news of her husband, and having a tiny little baby to find food for, I do think the poor young

lady's heart nearly broke. I never heard exactly how the money matter was with her, but I believe that when Mrs. Fleming died she would have nothing to live on but her husband's pay, which was stopped when he was given up for lost. Mr. Newcome was very kind, and paid her rent, and helped her along while he lived; and then Mr. Conway saw her; but it was a long time before she would marry him, long after the poor old rector was dead and gone, and she found that taking in needlework was worse than going on the parish. I often think of her—I do, indeed, sir—waiting day after day for her husband, who was never to come home. I'd rather, myself, have married anybody than a sailor. There's no telling, when once they go, whether they'll ever come



back again. They're worse nor soldiers for that."

Here the woman, suddenly conceiving that she had talked quite enough, and perhaps a little too much, dropped a courtesy and left the room; but came back again to ask two questions—At what hour would the gentleman please to dine? and would he like to have a bed-room in her house? She could recommend her bed-rooms. Her linen was clean as snow.

"I will tell you presently," answered Holdsworth. "I have not yet decided upon my movements."

"There's a nice plump fowl——"

"Yes, cook me that by seven o'clock," said Holdsworth, who was feverishly impatient to be left alone.

She closed the door, and Holdsworth leaned his temples on his hands and fixed his heavy eyes on the bare table, taking the attitude of a student striving to master some difficult problem.

For many minutes he held this posture, presently lifted his head, and looked about him ; then took his hat and went out.

The landlord behind the bar made him a low bow, and offered his services to show him over the village. Holdsworth declined his offer with a "Thank you," and walked into the road. He glanced over his shoulder suspiciously as he advanced, disliking the inquisitive stare with which he had been followed through the bar of the inn by the people drinking there, but no one watched him. He held a stick,

on which he leaned as he moved, like an infirm man; and often he paused and gazed around him. The people in the roadway, or in the houses, eyed him as he passed with the curiosity a stranger seldom fails to excite in small, unfrequented places; but he took no notice of them; his mind was intent on vivifying the impressions it was receiving with old memories, and adjusting the ideas which had been restored to him out of the dark and secret hiding-places of the past.

Few changes had been made in the aspect of the little village to embarrass the picture which his recovered memory had submitted to him. Some alterations in the external form of one or two shops, and two freshly-built houses on the left-

hand side facing the blacksmith's shed, were the only new features in the familiar scene of this quaint broad thoroughfare.

His steps grew more reluctant, his face took a sharper expression of pain, though never losing its characteristic of hardness and severity, as he drew near to his old home. He forced himself forwards, and, when abreast, halted and looked at it.

The windows were blindless, the garden showed signs of long neglect, and a board nailed to a post leaned towards the road, bearing the announcement, in painted letters, that the house was to let. A row of cobwebs garnished the woodwork of the gate, and glistened in the sunshine; the bare rooms, visible through the windows, looked cheerless and inhospitable; the window-glass was dirty, and some of the

panes in the kitchen window were broken. The grass about the house was tall and vivid. That window, looking towards the trees between the lanes, belonged to Dolly's room. There were white soft curtains to it in those days, and the glass was pure and transparent as spring-water. That room on the left was the sitting-room. There they had taken their meals; there they had played forfeits, had hunted the slipper, had made the walls ring with innocent laughter. He remembered the old grandmother's placid smile, the rector's kindly jokes, his Dolly's sweet face, throwing a light of purity and beauty about her. And under the sill were the dead branches of the clematis, still held to the wall by the pieces of black leather Dolly's own hand had nailed. Such humble

signs make grief sharper than large memorials.

He stood leaning upon his stick, losing all sense of the present in this vision of the past. His thoughts, taking their departure from the time when he first fitted out that house as a home for Dolly, flowed regularly downwards. He was a bridegroom again, and his wife was at his side, and her eyes upon his, and their hands clasped. Now the shadow of separation that was to darken them presently was felt; and then came the eve of his departure, thronged with the memory of kisses sweet and bitter, of tears and broken prayers, and brave hopes battling with sullen misgivings. He was now on board the "Meteor," and now in the open boat, surrounded by the dying, and himself

suffering tortures it broke him down to recall ; and now he was in Australia, striving with memory, which would yield no answer to his passionate prayers. But the finger of God pointed the way to his old home ; and now he was returning to England, with his past still hidden in gloom, but with his heart not unhopeful of the morning that was to break after the long darkness of the night. And finally, with the old village of Southbourne before him, came the rush of memory—the brief exultation—the spasm of fear—the terror that held him mute—the disclosure that showed him his wife less his, than had he traversed all the desolate miles of water only to kneel by her grave. . . .

Tears would have relieved him, but he

could not weep. He turned and moved slowly away, stopping again and again to look back at the little empty house, while sobs convulsed him, and a sense of supreme desolation and friendlessness weighed him down.

END OF VOL. II.



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